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THE NEWSPAPER FOR MAIDSTONE, MALLING, LARKFIELD AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES

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Issue No 88

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May 20, 2009



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HEALTH & BEAUTY

Top tips to help you feel good



WE'RE NOT GANG OF CROOKS, SAYS MP

WHAT'S ON & WATCH

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SHOWTIME: The Living Land Show at Detling attracted large crowds. Search 'land'

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ISSN 1753-121-7



■ BY ANNA WHITE

TOUGH-talking Ann Widdecombe has criticised MPs who have abused the expenses system.

The Daily Telegraph newspaper this week uncovered the allowances claimed by Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs.

Miss Widdecombe, pictured, Conservative MP for Maidstone and Weald, has spoken out against the named MPs who have used their expenses for extravagant items such as wide-screen televisions or swimming pools.

The former Shadow Home Secretary, who will retire at the next general election, told Yourmaidstone she is concerned that the revelations have given all MPs a bad reputation.

Miss Widdecombe said: "The public are fed up and confused. This has made us all look like crooks, when we are certainly not."

Although Miss Widdecombe supports some of Tory leader David Cameron's suggestions to regain control of his party's expenses, she does not agree with his suggestion to change the allowance to maintain MP's second homes.

The Daily Telegraph reported that Miss Widdecombe claimed £598.97 in December 2004 to "drain heating system and install new radiator in lounge" at her designated second home in Kent.

She said: "Some of what David Cameron has said is very good, but not that we can only use



RACING TO SAVE LIVES

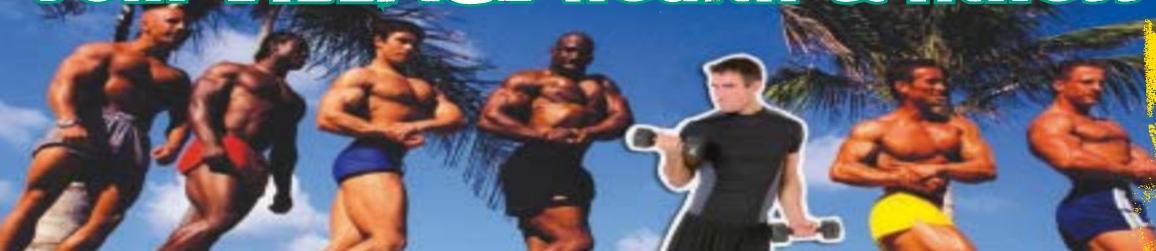
This young lady joined her mother in braving the English weather as the Race for Life fundraising events got under way in Maidstone at the weekend.

Claudia, six, and mum Susan, both from Maidstone, united with thousands of women for this year's first race in Mote Park on Sunday. About 4,000 entrants walked, jogged or ran the 5k course to raise funds for Cancer Research UK.

FULL STORY AND MORE PICTURES ON PAGE 4

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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TOP TV CLIPS**



1 Thousands were in Faversham at the weekend for its annual classic cars show. Search 'cars'



2 Thanet South Conservative candidate Laura Sandys' warning over large-scale GP clinics. Search 'Sandys'



3 Gills boss Mark Stimson looks ahead to the play-off final at Wembley. Search 'Gillingham'

SEE OUR SISTER PAPERS KENT ON SUNDAY AND THE SATURDAY EDITION FOR ALL THE WEEKEND'S COUNTY NEWS AND SPORT

ACTING EDITOR: Jon Coates 01303 817048

GROUP EDITOR: Gary Wright 01303 817032

WEBSITE: www.yourmaidstone.co.uk

TELEPHONE ADVERTISING: 01303 817110

FAX: (Advertising) 01303 817002

EMAIL: Editorial: yourmaidstone@kosmedia.co.uk. Sales: advertising@kosmedia.co.uk

HEAD OFFICE ADDRESS: Apple Barn, Hythe Road, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6SR

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Heating repair delays alarm plaza residents

EXCLUSIVE

■ BY ANNA WHITE

RESIDENTS of newly-built flats are still waiting for repairs to their homes seven months after being warned they were at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Owners and tenants at the Riverside Plaza in Hart Street, Maidstone, received precautionary letters from developer Barratt Homes in September last year, Yourmaidstone exclusively reported.

A resident at the development contacted this paper after being alarmed by a letter telling occupants they needed to contact British Gas urgently to have their central heating checked or face having their gas supply capped.

But the same resident, who lives with a flatmate, has spoken to Yourmaidstone again after being contacted by the developers last week to say a five-day check is needed to examine the flue pipe on the boiler.

He said: "We were told by our letting agent that Barratts had organised for somebody to come and carry out work on the boiler flue less than a week before they were due to do it.

"They said it would take five days to complete, which suggests to me there's major work needed."

Barratt Homes appointed British Gas – which did not fit the central heating systems – to carry out the checks last year as a precaution as it was "identified that an installation in one home was not in compliance with manufacturers' instructions".

In the letter, the developer assured residents the heating system was installed and commissioned by an independent Corgi-registered engi-



RIVERSIDE PLAZA: Residents have been alarmed by central heating problems

neer and therefore would have been legally checked and certified.

After contacting Barratt Homes about the latest claim, Nick Fenton, managing director of Barratt Kent, said: "Since October 2008 we have been implementing a comprehensive programme of works on the flues at Riverside Plaza to ensure they are installed to manufacturers' instructions and are as risk-free as possible.

"We have completed checks at 143 of the 153 properties and the programme will be concluded later this year. We apologise to residents for any inconvenience caused in the meantime."

The concerned resident said: "It's been one thing after another since we moved in. First we had the worry of carbon monoxide poisoning, now we're told they're going to have to come in every day to carry out even more work on the boiler.

"It's ridiculous that these properties were allowed to go on sale when there is clearly some sort of problem.

"It seems firms are more concerned about finishing jobs quickly rather than properly. It's not acceptable."

yourmaidstone NEWS IN BRIEF

Fast food trio sought after street stabbing

DETECTIVES are appealing for information about three fast food fans after a 20-year-old man was stabbed during a night out in Maidstone town centre.

The victim was taken to St Thomas' Hospital, south London, after he was stabbed during an incident at the junction of St Faith's Street and Station Road on Saturday April 11, at about 11.30pm. He is expected to make a full recovery.

Det Con Wayne Henneker said: "All three are believed to live in the Maidstone area and regularly attend KFC and McDonald's in Week Street." Call 01795 419161 if you can help.

NHS superbug appeal after pay-off ruling

A FORMER chief executive at the centre of a hospital superbug scandal is seeking leave to appeal against a High Court ruling which blocked her £250,000 pay-off.

Rose Gibb was at the helm of Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust when two outbreaks of Clostridium difficile resulted in the deaths of at least 90 patients.

She sued for breach of contract after being refused the full pay-off, but Mr Justice Treacy dismissed her claims at the High Court and refused the right to appeal. Ms Gibb has now sought leave to appeal the decision after taking legal advice.

Grave concern over cemetery tributes

MOURNERS at Paddock Wood cemetery have been asked to keep their tributes to loved ones off the grass.

Grieving families who have left items such as pot plants, toy windmills and small figures next to headstones have been told they have three weeks to remove them.

Otherwise the items will be taken away by council staff.

Paddock Wood Town Council says tributes can be placed on headstones but not on the lawn because it makes maintenance difficult.



For information and advice on travelling in Kent and for all our traffic regulation orders, please see the Kent on Saturday or the Kent on Sunday or visit our website at www.kent.gov.uk/highways

Anniversary competition climaxes today as artists face judging panel



IN THE FRAME: The panel will look at works submitted by (from left) Benjamin Humphrey, Barry Charlton, Rebecca Crosbie, Kay Gretton and Jacqueline Marie Stevens (below right) before announcing the StARTle 2009 winner

Five-star showing by StARTle contenders



FIVE artists have been chosen to go through to the final of the StARTle 2009 competition – which will be decided today.

Maidstone council, supported by Yourmaidstone, launched the search for the best up-and-coming artists in the borough to mark the first anniversary of the Hazlitt Arts Centre.

One artist who has not exhibited before will win a free four-week exhibition at the Graham Clarke gallery inside the Earl Street arts centre, which could be the break they need to launch their career.

After receiving 34 entries by last Wednesday's deadline, the judging panel, led by renowned Maidstone artist Graham Clarke, met on Friday to select a shortlist of five possible winners.

Mr Clarke was joined on the panel by the acting editor of Yourmaidstone Jon Coates,

■ BY ANNA WHITE

Maidstone council's marketing manager Vronni Ward and Laurence Wood, the head of the University of the Creative Arts in Canterbury.

They chose Jacqueline Marie Stevens, Benjamin Humphrey, Rebecca Crosbie, Barry Charlton and Kay Gretton as the five finalists.

All five have been asked to present more of their work to the judges today (Wednesday) before the winner is chosen.

Mr Clarke said: "I was very pleased with the number of entrants – 300 would have been too many but 34 entries is perfect.

"The quality of work was very good and there are some interesting pieces. All the judges were great and we all agreed on the shortlist.

"We devised a democratic system, which worked very well.

"I'm looking forward to meeting

the artists and seeing what other work they have to offer."

The winner of StARTle 2009 will be announced at 7.30pm during the Hazlitt's anniversary party on Saturday, May 30.

The event includes free activities during the day and an evening performance by top British comedian Mark Steel in the Exchange Studio to round off the celebrations.

Mr Steel has performed as a stand-up on the British comedy circuit and national tours since 1983 and will be on stage at the Hazlitt Theatre from 8pm.

As the competition's media partner Yourmaidstone had two pairs of tickets to give away for the comedy night.

Entrants had to answer the question: Which Maidstone street was TV artist the late Tony Hart born in?

The winners, who gave the correct answer of Hastings Road, are Claire Beale, from Maidstone, and John Barfoot, from Vinters Park.



JUDGING PANEL: Vronni Ward, Graham Clarke, Laurence Wood and Jon Coates

'We're not crooks'

FROM FRONT PAGE
our allowance for just the mortgage or rent for our second homes and petrol.

"Expenses should be used sensibly, which doesn't mean claiming for a wide-screen television.

"But what happens when the boiler blows up in your second home which you only have because you are an MP?"

"For an MP from a modest profession, with an unemployed wife and two children, they're going to have to watch budgets."

The MP also voiced concern about the way the three party leaders, Mr Cameron, Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg, have handled the revelations.

Ms Widdecombe, who has been a prominent MP for more than 20 years, said: "All three party leaders have rushed to be the first to come up with a solution, and each one has tried to be tougher than the first, and then the next would be tougher than that."

Bard classic with a very modern theme

FAMILIES will be able to see an outdoor performance of a classic Shakespeare play this summer – with a credit crunch twist.

After the success of last summer's A Midsummer Night's Dream, the Hazlitt Arts Centre and Changeling Theatre are returning with a special performance of The Merchant of Venice.

The performance stars former Hollyoaks actor Oliver Farnworth – who played Will Hackett in the teenage soap – as Lorenzo.

Director Rob Forknall said: "It's set in a city, in a world not that far from our own. This is a credit crunch of Shakespearian proportions."

And in keeping with the credit crunch theme, ticket prices for the show will cost just £10.

Producer Mandy Hare, of the Hazlitt Arts Centre in Maidstone, said: "The Merchant of Venice, one of Shakespeare's most complex plays, has always fascinated us."

"The perennial favourites of cross-dressing and hidden agendas are all there in abundance. But then you have the darker themes of fractured societies, racism, financial collapse – all of which makes it particularly apposite choice for us this year."

Local performances of The Merchant of Venice will take place at the Heritage Millennium Amphitheatre on July 16; Boughton Monchelsea Place on July 24-26 and August 8-9; and The Friars at Aylesford on August 7.

To book, call 01622 758611 or visit www.hazlittartscentre.co.uk.



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Brief footbridge closure for maintenance checks

PEOPLE are being advised that a walkway bridge in Maidstone will be closed for a short time tomorrow (Thursday) for maintenance checks.

Lockmeadow Bridge, which is behind David Lloyds fitness club and the Odeon cinema, will be closed for about an hour in the late morning.

A council official said the land-side ramp will be closed for most of the morning but there will be staff on-site to assist people with the stairs when the bridge is open.

Free hearing aid clinic at Methodist church hall

ANYONE with a NHS hearing aid can drop in to one of Hi Kent's free clinics to get it cleaned, retubed and collect fresh batteries.

The charity is running another of its free aftercare clinics for hearing aid users in Headcorn on Tuesday next week.

People can visit the clinic in the Methodist hall, behind the church, between 10am and 11am on May 26.

Advice can also be offered on hearing loss and the services available.

Man beaten and robbed

POLICE are appealing for information after a man was beaten and robbed in an early-morning attack.

The 48-year-old victim was approached by two men near the Honda shop on Loose Road, Maidstone, between 12.30am and 12.40am, on Friday, April 24.

One of the men punched the victim in the face and took his rucksack, which contained a flask and keys. The attacker was white, about 30, 6ft tall, with brown, gelled hair.

He had a foreign accent and was wearing a dark zip-up jumper. Call Crimestoppers on 0800 555111 if you can help.

Bluebell walkers thanked

HOSPICE bosses have thanked hundreds of walkers for helping to raise more than £40,000 at an annual fundraiser.

The Bluebell Walk, in aid of the Heart of Kent Hospice, attracted 1,500 walkers of all ages on an eight-mile circular walk through countryside near Harrietsham on May 3.

The Aylesford-based hospice has thanked all the walkers and to staff at Tesco in Grove Green who provided a ploughman's lunch for each walker.

Mote Park's first Race for Life shrugs off the showers



RAINING CHAMPIONS: Race for Life participants defied the blustery showers to raise cash for Cancer Research UK



START THEM YOUNG: All ages took part

Ladies: on your marks, get wet ... go!

THOUSANDS of women donned pink outfits to brave heavy showers and blustery winds on Sunday to take part in this year's first Race for Life in Mote Park.

The 5k event set off at 11am in torrential rain, but the runners and walkers were met with welcome sunshine towards the finish.

Despite the damp weather 4,000 women of all ages ran, jogged or walked the route through the Maidstone park to raise funds for Cancer Research UK.

Among those taking part were the Thompson family: 22-year-old Katie, her mother Diane, sister Vicki, 21, and her grandmother Betty Morris, all from Maidstone.

They take part in the Maidstone Race for Life each year in memory of Diane's first-born daughter, Sally, who died from a rare form of cancer of the kidneys just days before her fourth birthday in 1986.

■ BY ANNA WHITE

This year had an extra importance as it marked five years since 78-year-old Betty was given the all-clear from breast cancer and she is now out of remission.

When the family crossed the finish line they released pink balloons in memory of Sally and to mark Betty's recovery.

Katie said: "It went really well, we got absolutely soaked but it was definitely worth it. My nan did really well and we all let our balloons go at the end, which was really nice."

Cancer Research UK manager Natasha Eiteme said: "The Maidstone Race for Life saw 4,000 ladies take part in a fantastic event."

"I was so pleased to see so many arrive even though we had very unpredictable weather. But the weather did not deter the amazing women who took part. I'm so proud."

Sunday's run was the first of two Race for Life events in Mote Park this year. The second



IN THE PINK: Race for Life friends hang on to their hats

is on June 7. Already 4,000 women have signed up and filled all the places for the June race, including a team from KOS Media, publishers of this newspaper.

The KOS Media team, which includes staff from editorial, sales and admin is Erica Jones, Jo Nicoll, Lucy Williams, Anna White, Clare Bairam and Sally Ingram. You can sponsor our team at www.raceforlife.org/kosmedia or visit www.raceforlife.org to find out more. The second Maidstone Race for Life will be followed by others across the county, including Tunbridge Wells, Gillingham, Herne Bay, Canterbury, Folkestone and Margate.

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For more information and to book your space at this years event call Liz Hare on 01303 817172 or email liz.hare@constructionexpo.co.uk



GOING FOR GOLD: Cllr Brian Moss joins Maidstone's Olympic hopefuls for the launch of the sponsorship website

Help us to bring home medals at London 2012

OLYMPIC hopefuls and businesses came together to launch a website dedicated to bringing home gold at London 2012.

The sponsorship site, www.maidstonesdream.co.uk – Bring a Medal Home, is funded by Maidstone council and supported by Yourmaidstone.

It went live at a ceremony at Maidstone Gateway in King Street on Tuesday evening. The website features Maidstone's top athletes, including their sport, name, age, photos, education background, sporting history, aspirations, coach, and achievements.

Businesses can search through the profiles and choose who they would like to sponsor.

Maidstone council's cabinet member for leisure and culture, Brian Moss, appealed to business representatives at the event.

He said: "Every business in Maidstone can be involved and can afford £20 or £30 a month to help these athletes pay for their travel, food, accommodation or phone.

"Just by giving these athletes their support businesses are showing they care."

Ed Hamilton, a 22-year-old 400m hurdler from Linton, who has been dreaming of making it to the London 2012 Olympics for the last three years, appealed to the businesses on behalf of all the athletes.

■ BY ANNA WHITE

He said: "We are not just looking for cash but also help in kind. My uncle is a butcher and he helps me by giving me free steaks.

"I spend about £2,500 per year on things such as travelling, and the bank of mum and dad can only stretch so far.

"But it is not only what you can do for us. We can make appearances at your events, hold coaching classes and make some great opportunities."

Paralympian hopeful Ian Payne, 12, who has specialised in wheelchair tennis for eight years, said: "It has always been my dream to go to the Olympics and the fact they will be in London has just pushed me even harder."

His parents Glynis and Robert Payne, from East Farleigh, said they are "extremely proud" of their son and spent the evening mingling with businesses hoping to set up some sponsorship links.

Frances Sweeting, from Maidstone-based Horwath Clark Whitehill accountancy firm, said: "This is a great initiative for businesses to encourage these individuals."

Yourmaidstone will profile one of the site's athletes every month from next Wednesday.

Anyone wishing to register their interest should call Karen Jeal on 01622 602759 or email maidstonesdream@maidstone.gov.uk.

Arson suspects on CCTV

DETECTIVES have released CCTV images of two boys they want to speak to in connection with an arson attack at a school.

The blaze started when portable buildings were set alight at New Line Learning Academy in Boughton Lane, Loose, between 9-9.20pm on Monday, February 27.

The fire caused damage estimated at £250,000 and three fire crews were called to the scene.

Officers are hoping the

individuals in the images, who seem to be in their teens, may be able to help with the investigation.

One wore a light-coloured hoodie, light shoes, and dark trousers. The other wore light trousers and a dark, long-sleeved top with a small logo on the left-hand side.

Detective Constable Clive Fowler said: "I would urge anyone with information to call Maidstone police on 01622 690055 or Crime stoppers on 0800 555111."



yourmaidstone NEWS IN BRIEF

Police bravery rewarded

A HIGH-ranking officer has been honoured for his bravery in arresting a murderer.

Chief Superintendent Alasdair Hope, now area commander for Mid Kent Police, was on his way home one night in September 2006, when he heard about a fatal stabbing in Park Wood on his police radio.

He drove to the area, saw a man matching the suspect's description near a block of flats, spoke to him and walked with him.

Ch Supt Hope persuaded the man to go to a well-lit road, told him he was a police officer and arrested him on suspicion of murder.

The suspect was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison at Maidstone Crown Court on June 12, 2007.

The area commander's actions were praised at the Chief Constable's Awards held at Kent Police College in Maidstone last Wednesday. Seven other officers from the Mid Kent area were also honoured.

Farmers' market booming

WEST Malling Farmers Market has flourished since being saved from closure.

Yourmaidstone reported last month that the monthly market was in danger of closing when its funding was pulled.

But Cllr Trudy Dean, leader of the Liberal Democrat group on KCC, used her contacts to secure funding with help from Steve Woods, of Meopham Farmers Market, and Produced in Kent, and the April market was described by stallholders as the best yet.

The next market is in the High Street from 10am to 2pm this Sunday.

Cooking on the frontline

A WARTIME oven will be cooking foods that would have been eaten by Crimean War soldiers at an event this summer.

The Soyer Stove, which was invented by Alexis Soyer, will be at the War and Peace Show, at The Hop Farm in Paddock Wood, from July 22 to 26.

The oven, which is credited with saving more lives than Florence Nightingale, will be part of a display of field catering, staged by a team from the Royal Logistic Museum.

For more information on the event, go to www.thehopfarm.co.uk or www.thewarandpeaceshow.com.

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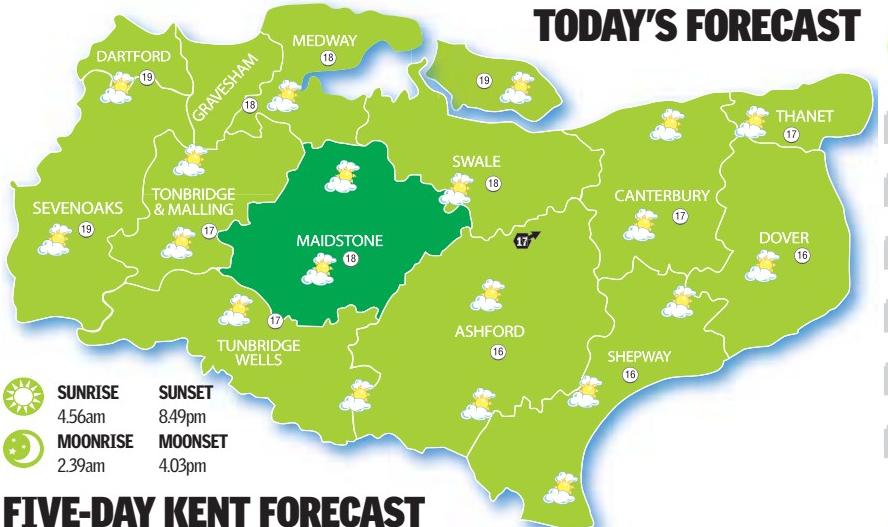
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WEEKEND HIGH TIDES

Chatham	Saturday	12:38pm	5.8m
	Sunday	1:22pm	6.0m
Dover	Saturday	10:38am	6.3m
	Sunday	11:23am	6.5m
Dungeness	Saturday	10:57am	7.2m
	Sunday	11:39am	7.5m
Ramsgate	Saturday	11:08am	4.8m
	Sunday	11:53am	4.9m
Sheerness	Saturday	12:27pm	5.6m
	Sunday	1:12pm	5.7m
Whitstable	Saturday	12:27pm	5.0m
	Sunday	1:13pm	5.1m



AROUND THE WORLD YESTERDAY

Amsterdam	16°C	Madrid	23°C
Athens	27°C	New York	13°C
Barcelona	20°C	Paris	17°C
Beijing	34°C	Rome	24°C
Bombay	33°C	Sydney	20°C
Cape Town	17°C	Tenerife	23°C
Cardiff	12°C	Tokyo	27°C
Gibraltar	23°C	Vancouver	21°C
Hong Kong	33°C	Warsaw	21°C
Las Palmas	23°C	Wellington	12°C

FIVE-DAY KENT FORECAST

	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon		Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon
Ashford	16°C	19°C	19°C	16°C	18°C	Gravesend	17°C	19°C	19°C	17°C	19°C
Canterbury	16°C	18°C	18°C	16°C	18°C	Maidstone	16°C	18°C	19°C	17°C	18°C
Chatham	16°C	18°C	17°C	15°C	16°C	Ramsgate	16°C	18°C	18°C	16°C	18°C
Dartford	17°C	19°C	19°C	17°C	19°C	Rochester	16°C	18°C	17°C	15°C	16°C
Dover	15°C	16°C	16°C	15°C	16°C	Sevenoaks	15°C	17°C	17°C	16°C	16°C
Faversham	16°C	18°C	17°C	15°C	16°C	Sittingbourne	16°C	18°C	17°C	15°C	16°C
Folkestone	15°C	16°C	16°C	15°C	16°C	Tonbridge	15°C	18°C	19°C	17°C	18°C
Gillingham	16°C	18°C	17°C	15°C	16°C	Tun Wells	15°C	18°C	19°C	17°C	18°C



FUND-RAISERS: Fans presented a cheque for cancer charity

Charity scores through dedication of supporters

FOOTBALL fans from Maidstone raised nearly £10,000 of a £23,000 donation given to Arsenal's Charity of the Season.

Members of the worldwide Arsenal Supporters Club combined fundraising efforts to present the Teenage Cancer Trust with the cheque before their clash with Chelsea at the Emirates Stadium on Sunday May 10.

The contribution was the biggest of all – raising £9,700 of the impressive fund by hosting various fundraisers.

Tom Smethers, from Maidstone, was pitch-side at the Chelsea game to help present the cheque to the charity, which helps improves the lives of teenagers living with cancer.

He said: "Each year Arsenal selects a new charity of the season, so it's important for us to keep coming up with new ideas and support the club in other ways than just on the pitch."

"We're delighted by the amount of money raised this year, not just by our own supporters club, but everyone's – I think Arsenal will manage to top the £300,000 target which is testament to everyone's enthusiasm and support for this fantastic cause."

The donation will be put towards Arsenal's goal of raising £300,000 for an education zone at the charity's new day care centre which is due to be opened in London in 2012.

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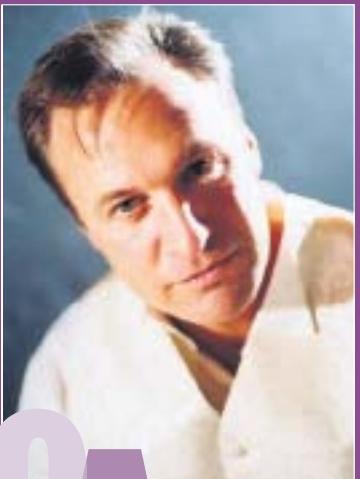
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yourlocalinterview

QUESTION & ANSWER

DUNCAN GALLOWAY



Q & A

The lead singer of the Pasadena Roof Orchestra, who entertained so hugely at Folkestone's Leas Cliff Hall, spoke to **James Alexandre** about being on tour, delivering sushi and bowling out an England cricketer

Q Tell us a little about yourself

A I am the lead singer and band leader of the Pasadena Roof Orchestra, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

Q How did you first become involved in the Pasadena Roof Orchestra?

A I first heard of the orchestra in the 1980s and had always admired the music of the dance-band era. I first came across it on Dennis Potter's TV series *Pennies From Heaven*.

Q What is it like to be in a modern swing and dance orchestra?

A I suspect the rigours of being on the road on tour in the 1920s and 30s is not much different from today. Instead of a tour bus, we tend to fly quite a lot these days, which is an experience I don't enjoy.

The reward for all that time spent in queues for security, queues for coffee, queues for boarding, is seeing so many different places. I would hate, however, to have a milometer fitted on me – I fear it would be over the million mark by now.

Q What would you say has been your most memorable or exciting experience so far?

A One of my most memorable experiences is sailing into Sydney harbour on the P&O

cruise-liner Oriana's maiden world voyage. It is a naturally beautiful bay, and the opera house is a modern wonder of the world.

Working with the Pasadena Roof Orchestra has become almost a life passion for me. In my time with the band I have met some extraordinary musicians and some extraordinary characters.

Music, especially jazz music, is a lot about listening to what the others are doing around you. It is probably as important, if not more so, than what you do yourself.

During my time with the band, I have had the benefit of listening to some great players. In this respect I have been very privileged.

Q How did you become involved in showbusiness?

A I trained as an actor at the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art. I have had some great experiences in the thespian world, including visiting the Taj Mahal and being a founder member of the Stadium Theatre Company when P&O Cruises put a repertory company to sea. My first world cruise was on a lovely ship, SS Canberra.

I was always keen on singing and play saxophone and clarinet myself, so the progression from actor to musician was quite logical. I have performed in a few musicals, including *Guys and Dolls*, and *Les Misérables*. I sometimes get the urge to do a serious dramatic role again, but it soon passes!

Q Have you been to Folkestone before and what do you know of the area?

A The Pasadena Roof Orchestra have played at Folkestone before, including most recently in March. More information about the orchestra can be found at the website www.pasadena.co.uk. It has a brief history of the band, a picture gallery, tour dates and other essential information.

Q What do you like to do in your spare time when you're not working?

A When I am not queuing up at an airport I am a keen golfer and happy attempting to lower my handicap at my club near Cambridge. I also spend a fair bit of time helping my wife's business which we jointly own, called The Cambridge Sushi Company. We supply really good-quality sushi to the colleges, canteens and offices in and around the city. The proof of this is the fact that I still enjoy eating it after sometimes seeing so much of it. You can find out more at www.cambridge-sushi.com.

Q Tell us something that people don't tend to know about you

A I used to play cricket to a fairly good level. I was once a wicketkeeper/batsman and my claim to fame was getting Mark Ramprakash out twice in one delivery. I stumped him down the leg side and he also got an edge. I asked the umpire at the bowler's end if he heard it and he said he didn't, but I know the truth!

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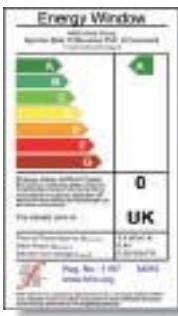
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School takes part in a world skipping record attempt. Search 'skipping'.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

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Fired Mona admits gay was wrong for Margate

■ BY STEVE KNIGHT

FORMER beauty queen Mona Lewis says she should have trusted her knowledge of Kent to avoid being booted off *The Apprentice*.

The 28-year-old from Sittingbourne was the latest candidate to be told "You're fired" by Sir Alan Sugar on the popular BBC One show



NOT IMPRESSED: Sir Alan Sugar

wishes she had fought harder against the idea: "Being a resident of Kent and knowing more about it than the others, I thought it would be better to target the family market because Margate has a lot of family heritage, it's receiving a lot of investment and there are major things going on."

"I wish I had fought harder against the gay idea because I thought it limited the market. You can be gay and still be part of a family."

Despite Mona's opposition to her team's idea, Sir Alan revealed on the show how the branding experts and residents who acted as judges for the task were supportive of it.

What they were less impressed with was the shoddily-produced leaflet and cluttered series of posters that accompanied the campaign.

Mona was fired from the show after being brought back into the boardroom with project manager Debra Barr and former commercial manager James McQuillan.

She said: "I was fired because Sir Alan felt I wasn't fully backing up the team and also because he could not see where he could fit me into his operation."

"I think the time was right for me to leave

because I really missed my little boy and eight weeks was a long time to be away from him, so I was happy in that respect."

Mona, who was born in Karachi, Pakistan, and is a former financial manager, now works for Business Link to help Kent firms capitalise on the 2012 Olympics.

She said that "only time will tell" if her time on *The Apprentice* would help or hinder her job prospects but that she was pleased with the way she came across on the show.

Experience

Mona said: "It was definitely an experience to be on *The Apprentice* and it was quite an honour to be selected, especially as I have only lived in the country for four years."

"I never claimed to be good at creating or designing things, but I'm so pleased I was able to show off my selling and negotiating skills and I think I acted with dignity and professionalism at all times."

National accounts manager Lorraine Tighe is now Kent's only representative left.

The next episode of *The Apprentice* can be seen at 9pm tonight on BBC One.



GAY RESORT? Apprentice Mona (inset) admits she should have promoted Margate to families



DRY SPELL: Weather experts predict a hot summer

Summer thirsty work for wildlife

Pat Crawford gives wildlife gardening advice from Hadlow College in her exclusive column for Yourmaidstone

THE majority of weather forecasters say we're in for a barbecue summer this year.

If they are right it will be good for dining al fresco in the evenings but not quite so good for wildlife and gardens because natural sources of water can soon dry up.

Hopefully your water butts and tanks were filled when rain was plentiful.

This will – deservedly – bring benefits if a long, hot summer results in the water companies imposing hosepipe bans.

We only need a few consecutive dry days for water to become a problem for wildlife – especially in more built-up areas.

Shallow birdbaths and other containers dry out quickly when the sun is hot and so now is a good time both to review existing watering places and add a few extra ones.

Parent birds are busy at this time of the year feeding their young. They work long days and will still be seeking food for their offspring well into the evening.

Why not swap watching a wildlife programme on the television for the real thing? Sitting quietly – surrounded by the scents of the garden – a glass of chilled wine near at hand, has got to be the better option.

At this time of the year birds can be relied upon to collect insects to feed to their young.

This applies to seed-eating species as well as the insect-eaters as their first-choice food can be in short supply at this time of the year.

• Hadlow College offers a wide range of RHS, City and Guilds, and other horticulture courses. Call 0500 551434 for more details.

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Pick your own fruits and salads, beets and treats

FROM succulent strawberries to beetroot and asparagus, the Garden of England is set to reap plenty of rewards this summer for the pick-your-own season.

With a predicted spell of warm weather, there is renewed optimism from Kent growers who are anticipating strong crops and interest from a younger generation of customers.

Amid a wealth of TV gardening programmes and shows promoting healthier lifestyles, a greater number of people are embracing the five-a-day recommended dose of fruit and vegetables.

It all ties in perfectly with our 2009 campaign urging our readers to help protect the local economy by buying locally produced and supplied food and drink – spearheaded by our website www.foodforkent.co.uk, which unites the best producers under one online roof.

As a perennial favourite, demand for Kentish strawberries is particularly high. Martin Clews, of Stonepits farm at Seal Chart, near Sevenoaks, is expecting a strong response to the company's latest crop available next month.

"Things are looking pretty good for this year. We took over the business 17 years ago and it's coming up to the 50th anniversary of the company now," he said. He added that despite a poor summer last year, the firm's long-established reputation had ensured its survival.

Despite its success with several strawberry varieties, Mr Clews explained the pick-your-own business has in recent years been suffering a decline since its peak in the



1980s. He believed this was largely due to a combination of poor summer weather and supermarket competition producing fruit all-year round.

"It's a shame we are the only people producing pick-your-own strawberries in this area, there

used to be three or four others in this part of Kent when we first started out. We have had to move with the times and really ask people what strawberries they prefer, with the Old Cambridge being a real favourite – it goes back to the 60s and has a real old Englishness about it.

"This year we got in touch with more than 50 schools and my wife Jackie gave a lecture about how strawberries grow, and seeing the farm is a good way for them to learn."

Susie Mills, of Valley Arch pick-your-own

near Dartford was also enthused by the prospects for the new season. She explained they were anticipating a strong demand for its strawberry-growing run: "We are finding a lot of younger people are coming to do pick-your own these days, which is a good thing as it used to be mainly a more mature market. It's a nice thing for a family to do and there's nothing like having some local strawberries in the summer."

"As with all the produce we grow, it's much better than fruit and veg that has been frozen, where you lose a lot of the vitamins in the process."

Farm shops in the county have also reported significant interest in a wide range of locally grown summer crops.

Paula Everett of Macknade farm shop in Faversham said summer fruit and veg had been proving extremely popular. Sales of asparagus and strawberries (maturing early due to being grown in poly-tunnels) were also doing well.

The Kent firm's enthusiasm was also shared by the National Farmers' Retail & Markets Association (FARMA). It expected the UK to follow the American pick-your-own trend in being on course for a strong resurgence as customers find it an excellent way to get quality produce at the best prices.

"The time seems to be right for pick-your-own, reflecting the fact that people are prepared to 'do-it-themselves' to get quality and value," said Gareth Jones from FARMA.

He added: "Great value for money is just one of the advantages. The only other way to get such fresh and flavoursome produce is to grow it yourself."



A pedal-powered delivery

RECOGNISING how quickly the new season's asparagus is flying off the shelves, the manager of one hotel decided this week to go the extra mile to meet demand.

On Tuesday David Sharma of Charlton Hatch's Howfield Manor Hotel, ensured next to no carbon footprint for the hotel's asparagus supplies.

Mr Sharma collected the asparagus grown in nearby Blean from the Goods Shed market in Canterbury before taking it back to Howfield Manor Hotel to be used in the restaurant, and he took the journey under pedal power on a bicycle.

It came about after Mr Sharma, who cycles to Howfield from Canterbury, found out the local supplier Charles Atkins delivers to the Goods Shed, but would be unable to deliver to the hotel. Keen to keep food miles down, and to avoid another delivery journey, Mr Sharma decided to pick up his order of asparagus every week of the season by bike.

Howfield Manor Hotel has recently submitted an application to join Produced in Kent – the organisation set up to promote local producers and suppliers – to demonstrate its commitment to using local produce and supporting its producers.

• For the latest offers of local asparagus see www.foodforkent.co.uk.

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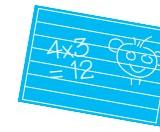
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BREAK TIME

French students switched on by visit

FRENCH exchange students and teachers were impressed by the high standards at MidKent College when they visited last month.

The foreign students, all aged between 16 and 18, took part in electronic engineering courses at the college's Oakwood Park campus in Maidstone to find out how French wiring systems differ from those used in England.

During their visit, the group from Lycee Alfred Kastler School in Denain, northern France, also accompanied college tutors to Littlebrook Power Station in Dartford, where they took part in practical and theory-based lessons.

Teacher Madame Ahmed said: "The workshops here are totally different to those we have in our school in France – they are much better equipped, worlds apart in fact."

Student Julien Bessirard, 17, added: "I really like MidKent College."

The equipment here is much bigger and of a much higher standard than I am used to."

Global get-together put future issues on the table

STUDENTS from across Europe came to Maidstone for a two-day conference to debate global issues.

The schoolchildren from Germany, France and Finland, joined pupils from secondary schools in Maidstone at the International Student Conference on May 6 and 7.

During the event, which was held at Cornwallis Academy in Linton, the students discussed ideas, made videos and devised a schedule for activities based on global topics.

The topics covered included global future, community and school future, and the future for individual students.

The groups worked together at the academy's new plaza, which opened at Easter, offering state-of-the-art facilities and technology.

On the final day of the conference the students had the opportunity to showcase their work during a presentation to headteachers, delegates and Kent County Council representatives.

Assistant principal Chloe Thompson, who

■ BY ANNA WHITE

ran the event, said: "The International Conference was a fantastic opportunity for pupils from different cultures to get together to discuss their different points of view about the future and how it will impact on them.

"Students were extremely positive and engaged throughout the two days and are looking forward to future events where they can discuss their ideas further."

"The success of this conference has enabled us to make this an annual event to hopefully be held in different countries."

Headteacher David Simons said: "This event was a fantastic opportunity for our students to meet other young people, experience different cultures and talk about education."

"The discussions were both animated and productive, and we plan to make this an annual event where our students will be involved in future return visits."

The schools which took part in the confer-



TABLE TALK: Students have discussion during conference

ence included Maidstone Grammar School, Maidstone Grammar School for Girls, Maplesden Noakes, St Simon Stock, Astor of Hever, Invicta Grammar School and both New Line Learning Academies.

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We all complain about the weather but no-one does anything about it

"ANYONE else, any other profession, if they were as incompetent, they'd be fired."

A frequent tirade, and applied almost invariably to those who forecast our weather.

I heard it just last week from a warden at a nature reserve, a man more familiar than most with the climate of these islands.

"They've forecast rain for every day this week and what did we get? Half an hour last night. The forecasts aren't worth bothering with. They should just give us the charts and let us make up our own minds," he said.

But of course 'they' don't. 'They' (the BBC, in this instance) have for the most part taken them away. We are, it appears, too stupid to be granted access to something as bewildering as a meteorological chart.

In truth, weather maps are no great puzzle, but in Dumb Britain it's best we're kept away from anything remotely challenging. In a way there's a logic to it. If the BBC's own forecast-

ers can't interpret a weather map, why should the layman? But it's a policy that is strangely flawed.

At the end of the forecast, those of us geeky enough to want more details are urged to visit the website. And here something odd has happened.

The website has had a makeover. But, in contrast to the TV, there hasn't been a dumbing down. Rather, the website has been rendered practically unusable.

It's near-impossible to find anything you want, links work on some computers but not others, while a bid to navigate the site is likely to leave you stranded in cyberspace.

Exasperated, you wind up back at the telly, where, if nothing else, the lovely Nazaneen Ghaffar makes the whole charade bearable.

Sadly, however, even she seems to have been got at behind the scenes. After a promising start her style has changed, presumably under orders.

You can imagine the pep talk: "Now,

Nazaneen, never forget you're talking to morons. All they want to know is whether it's a day in the garden or on the sunbed. Leap about like a jester. Put on an inane grin if the sun's coming out and pout if it's not."

But this is serious stuff. How many lives have been lost as a result of poor weather forecasting? Michael Fish, in a BBC news item in which he denies any role in the infamous 1987 hurricane-strength storm and lumps the blame on Bill Giles, finds a silver lining to that particular cloud.

"Craftily, I am trying to promote a book on the subject [extreme weather]..." he tells us.

What spiffing fun. Yet 18 people died in that storm. How many might still be with us if they'd been given the right facts? Perhaps we shouldn't ask. After all, what do we know?

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Question: Who are the Entertainment Pioneers behind the new Wallace and Gromit adventure games?

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yourletters

TALK TIME

KATE PATERSON

Manager of the new Rush salon in Maidstone talks about why Fremlin Walk was the best location for their outlet to move into



How did you get into hairdressing?

Working in the hair industry was always what I wanted to do. I trained in a salon near my home and then moved to London once I completed my qualification. I haven't looked back since.

Is being a salon manager always something you wanted to achieve?

Yes and no. It's a brilliant opportunity for me and after having taught hairdressing for six years it's great to have a new challenge. So far I'm really enjoying it, even though it's been non-stop since the opening.

Tell us about the Rush salons?

British Hairdressing Award winners, Rush, now have 37 salons across London and the South East and Rush Maidstone, in Fremlin Walk, is the latest addition to the group, offering a range of expert cuts, colours and treatments, as well as salon professional products. So whether you're after a classic cut or creative colour, a Rush Stylist will be there to guide you through.

Why did Rush choose Maidstone as a new location?

Fremlin Walk in particular is a great location for Rush. With salons in Tunbridge Wells, Canterbury and Bromley across Kent, Rush is able to make creative and cutting edge hairdressing accessible to all with a salon near you. We're open until 8pm weeknights so that you can pop in after work and 10am to 5pm on Sundays too.

YOUR LETTERS



We should progress or fade away

I have come to the conclusion that this nation of ours, and definitely Kent, has only themselves to blame if we fade away.

Why do I say this? Because it seems we do not want progress.

I am alluding to the proposed Kent International Gateway freight depot near Bearsted.

This is a thing that should be far bigger than the opinions of a few villagers.

Also I notice the age of some of those against the proposed freight station is 79.

Well, I am 71 and will be 72 at the end of this year, and I am all for such a development, it's no use trying to keep fields at the expense of progress.

When I was young and lived at Aldon Farm in Offham it was an area covered with orchards and now it isn't, also where these houses are, used to be farmland



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www.yourmaidstone.co.uk is updated daily, bringing you the latest, breaking news from across Maidstone as well as our villages. We will include the best on these pages too – ensuring your comments reach the widest possible audience.

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and woods.

The only objection I have is the fact that houses have been built with little thought of work or of young people.

If the powers to be were to ask my opinion, I would be all for a

freight station.

Don't forget over the past few years several firms have vanished, for instance Reed International, Halls Brickworks, and Travis Perkins to name a few.

As yet these places have not been replaced so not only does it need the freight station it also needs several other places to open.

It is the young ones coming along that we have to think about, not the opinions of people who do not like change.

Also just look at Japan, that country was destroyed during the war but look at it now. That's one country our country could take lessons from.

Mrs K L Wood, from Larkfield, by letter



There are cameras already on the M20

Your article in last week's paper states that new cameras will be created along the M20 for the proposed variable speed limit.

As someone who regularly travels along that section of motorway I can confirm that there are many dormant cameras along that stretch and they have been there for over a year now.

It would appear that the proposal is clearly going to go ahead whatever the consultation's outcome.

Ian Parish, by email

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Scrap toll fees in polluted agreement

I write after reading the story in Yourmaidstone on May 6 about calls to suspend the Dartford tolls to see if this reduces air pollution.

It seems very strange that in London there is a charge to stop congestion and pollution but a few miles down the road, at the Dartford Tunnel, there is a charge that causes congestion and pollution.

A Department of Transport spokesman said that without the toll traffic levels would be even higher, leading to more congestion and seriously worsening pollution. What a load of rubbish.

By getting rid of the toll charge traffic would flow quicker reducing congestion and pollution.

If another crossing is built it will also be a toll crossing causing yet more congestion and pollution in another area.

It is about time the Government honoured the agreement and scrapped the unfair toll charge.

Peter Nassan, by letter

Free factsheet will shed light on dyslexia

This week has been designated as Xtraordinary Week. The aim is to raise awareness, and focus on the strengths and talents, of dyslexic children everywhere.

To coincide with the awareness week I have written a free fact sheet on dyslexia, which provides information about the condition.

Children who have dyslexia can have problems with reading, writing or spelling.

It's believed that one in ten children have some form of dyslexia, which is Greek for "difficulty with words".

Parents naturally want the best for their children. They know that good literacy skills are the building blocks to educational success and a satisfying career.

But many parents are in the dark about their child's special educational needs and how best to help them.

That's why I welcome the launch of Xtraordinary Week and have written this fact sheet to help answer some of the many questions which parents may have about dyslexia.

For a free copy of the fact sheet, they can write to me at Dyslexia Awareness Fact Sheet, Appleford School, Shrewton, Nr Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP3 4HL, call 01980 621020, email secretary@appleford-wilts.sch.uk, or visit the website at www.appleford.wilts.sch.uk.

Dr Peter Gardner, educational psychologist, by email

Saddle up for charity bike ride to Paris

I am writing to encourage your readers to make September the month they decide to do something different this year – by taking part in Europe's first charity Folding Bike Challenge from London to Paris.

With 43 per cent of people in Kent believing they are not adventurous enough when embracing new challenges, the Folding Bike challenge is the perfect opportunity to try something different – making 2009 an unforgettable year.

Providing an alternative take on London to Paris cycle rides, the Folding Bike Challenge is supporting the British Heart Foundation (BHF) and the disability charity Scope.

Organised by events company Action Challenge, the challenge will see participants in the saddle for a gruelling 240 miles. Setting off from the capital's London Eye on September 9 and reaching the Eiffel Tower in Paris four days later.

It's guaranteed to be fun and is the perfect excuse to start training and getting into shape for the summer, so what are you waiting for Kent?

For information and to book your place today call 0207 354 1450 or visit www.foldingbikechallenge.com.

Thanks in advance for your help.
Kate Mitchell (BHF) and Jason Suckley (Scope), by email

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HISTORY dating back to the New Stone Age era and a working monastery are two reasons why a growing number of tourists are visiting Aylesford.

The village, which sits on the banks of the River Medway, has grown rapidly during the past 30 years and now boasts about 5,000 residents.

Despite the expansion, Aylesford has adapted well to its larger community and kept its characteristic charm through its village pubs, historic buildings and attractions.

Historians have been able to trace activity in the area back to the New Stone Age, which is documented from 4000BC to 2200BC, and has attracted plenty of visitors to the village.

One example of its extensive history is Aylesford Bridge, which crosses the River Medway and has been traced back to about the 14th century. Historians say it is one of the earliest bridges to be built in this country.

Some of the historic buildings may have been destroyed throughout time but several chamber tombs, including the village's famous Kits Coty House, and The Friars Aylesford Priory – home of the Carmelite order – still stand.

The impressive Friars site, which offers both outdoor and indoor chapels, remains home to Carmelites and still attracts pilgrims.



It is open to the public all year round and hosts a number of events throughout the year, including its popular summer and Christmas fairs.

There are good railway links to London and a number of hotels,

guest houses, restaurants, and bed and breakfasts, to meet the demands of a growing number of tourists.

Aylesford is also the home of The Heart of Kent Hospice, which helps adults and their families cope with life-limiting illnesses.

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On your doorstep - featuring Sutton Valence

THE village of Sutton Valence is at the centre of Maidstone's plans to host Olympic teams in the run-up to London 2012.

Sutton Valence School has already started work on a state-of-the-art athletics track, costing £794,000, in its 100-acre grounds.

The top independent school was nominated as an official Olympic training centre for athletics, badminton, basketball, fencing and archery earlier this year.

But if Olympic competitors come to the picturesque village they might struggle to focus on training, as they will be surrounded by scenic countryside and four traditional pubs.

The village, on the outskirts of Maidstone, sits on top of Sutton Valence Hill and boasts stunning views across the Weald of Kent.

Its hilltop location means the village's layout is staggered down the hill, creating crooked and windy streets which add to its charm and history, which dates back to Roman times.

Although it is quite a small village, Sutton Valence has still found enough room to have four traditional English pubs – all within five minutes walking distance of each other.

The Swan and the Queens Head, in Broad Street, are believed to be the oldest out of the four and date back to the 15th-century, followed by the Kings Head and the Clothworkers Arms.

The four pubs all come together each year on New Year's Day



to take part in the annual Pram Race, which sees teams in fancy dress race down the hill in a home-made kart.

The event is extremely popular with residents and often attracts plenty of visitors.

The senior section of Sutton Valence School is based in the vil-

lage and it has a sister preparatory school in neighbouring village Chart Sutton.

Oscar-winning actress Dame Judi Dench, 74, visited the village 18 months ago to officially open the school's new Baughan Theatre.



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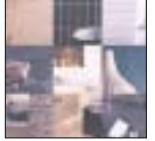


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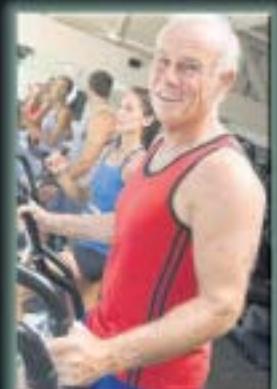
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You'll be raving about the dance music at Hop Farm

■ BY SIMON ROBINSON

BELGIAN mixmasters 2ManyDJs have been given top billing on the Hop Farm Festival's dance stage line up.

The cut-and-paste duo – famed for fusing tracks from the likes of the Velvet Underground, Destiny's Child, Dolly Parton and Salt 'n' Pepa into one essential album – will bring the Paddock Wood two-dayer to a close on Sunday, July 5.

Legendary French DJ Etienne De Crecy will perform live on the previous night.

The likes of Paul Weller, Doves, The View, Ash and Editors are set to grace the main stage over the weekend but Hop Farm organisers said anyone able to prise themselves away from the big draws would be in for a treat.

They said: "Headlining on Saturday we have the amazing Etienne De Crecy live, bringing his full-on show in his amazing cube structure.

"It is one of the best shows, if not the best, by a DJ.

"Sunday's headliner we have one of the biggest names in dance music, 2ManyDJs.

"They are going to be one of the highlights of this year's festival, I guarantee it'll be one of the most talked about shows in dance music circles this year.

"Check out the line up for details on the rest of bill... it is one of the best dance line up's this year. If you like your dance music, you won't want to leave this tent."

The Hop Farm Festival stands alone in the overcrowded festival market – offering an event free from ticket registration, VIP areas,



branding and sponsorship.

This year the festival offers a weekend experience of boutique camping, top-notch food and traditional ales, with some of the best artists playing across three stages.

The Hop Farm Festival takes place at The Hop Farm, Paddock Wood, on Saturday, July 4 and Sunday, 5.

Weekend tickets cost £125 with day tickets priced at £65.

For more information on this year's event visit www.hopfarmfestival.com.

Saturday, July 4

- The Fratellis
- Pigeon Detectives
- The View
- Ash
- Echo and the Bunnymen
- Etienne De Crecy
- Florence and the Machine
- Noah and the Whale

Sunday, July 5

- Paul Weller
- Editors
- Doves
- 2ManyDJs
- Super Furry Animals
- The Twang
- Mystery Jets
- Ladyhawke



TOP BILLING: (Top) 2ManyDJs have been given top billing on the dance stage line-up; and (above) legendary French DJ Etienne De Crecy will perform

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Offering men the help they are afraid to ask for

Kent Counselling for Men

WHEN it comes to personal matters many men are reluctant to seek the help of a counsellor.

Kent Counselling for Men has been set up to make talking therapies more accessible for men.

John Kennett of Kent Counselling for Men said: "Failed relationships. Distant children. Critical parents. Inappropriate outbursts of anger. Loveless marriages. Addictions to pornography. Flirtations and affairs. Feeling stuck and trapped. Unresolved grief. Bouts of impotency that have no medical explanation..."

"Men are plagued with problems like these but don't always take action to resolve them."

"Men's attitudes to counselling are changing. Traditionally they have not used counselling service. Indeed statistics from the counselling and psychotherapy profession still show that women are twice as likely to seek this sort of help than are men despite the fact that men are just as likely as women to suffer conditions such as depression."

Men's reluctance to seek help is further evidenced by government suicide figures – men are four times as likely to commit suicide as women. Thankfully, this trend is changing and men are increasingly using counselling services.

"It's easy to stereotype men as being unemotional, but this is far from the truth," continued John.



"Men are emotional but often lack the language and skills to know how to express and deal with their emotions. Men tend to believe that they should be able to sort themselves out on their own, that counselling is for people with 'bigger problems', or they simply don't want to admit that there is a problem that needs addressing."

Cost for a first session is just £20 – half the usual rate. "This toe-in-the-water is an opportunity for them to meet me and me to meet them," said John. "Hopefully by the end of this assessment session they know if this is something they want and I will be able to give them a steer as to what to expect."

Kent Counselling for Men, Maidstone Community Support Centre, Marsham Street, Maidstone ME14 1HH www.kentcounsellingformen.co.uk

TOP TIPS

Village Hotel, Maidstone

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GIGGLE your way through the bank holiday with the first Stand Up! Folkestone Comedy Festival.

The headline act of this inaugural comic celebration is Michael McIntyre, a phenomenally popular comedian whose show sold out within hours of tickets going on sale.

The son of a scriptwriter for Kenny Everett, he evidently has funny bones and his rise to fame over the last few years has been stellar. His next tour includes dates at Wembley Arena, so securing this intimate gig at Quarterhouse is a real achievement for the Creative Foundation.

Although McIntyre's show has sold out, there is plenty more going on over the long weekend.

On Saturday, Tony Allen, the 'Godfather of alternative comedy', will be running a stand-up workshop for aspiring comics. There is a preparatory exercise which needs to be completed before the event.

BBC Radio 1's resident magician Chris Cox exerts his unique brand of magic and psychology on Saturday at 6pm, demonstrating the skills that earned him five-star reviews at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and his debut West End show.

Watch the jaw-dropping antics of a mind reader who says he can't read minds in this hilarious and hugely entertaining show.

See six great comedians for just £10/£8 with Lonestar Comedy Club's Stand and Deliver at 8pm on Saturday. Fergus Craig, Gerry Howell, Danielle Ward, Anil Desai, Terry Saunders and Jim Smallman will keep the laughs coming at a recession-beating price.

Sunday sees a great line-up of free events and workshops for kids by improvisation troupe The Noise Next Door, Little Bulb Theatre, Usifu Jalloh and Emmanuel the Magnificent. At 4pm Ray Peacock will host the comedy trivia quiz, to



FESTIVAL LINE-UP: The Noise Next Door, the Scottish Falsetto Sock Puppet Theatre and comedian Michael McIntyre are booked

see who can take the crown.

The Variety Four-Pack at 8pm offers a great line-up of Rob Deering, Pete Firman and the Scottish Falsetto Sock Puppet Theatre, with Ray Peacock acting as compere.

Deering's award-winning music-based comedy has earned appearances on BBC3's Annually Retentive, BBC2's Never Mind The Full Stops and regular guest spots on Channel 4's Big Brother's Big Mouth.

Firman has become one of the country's leading conjurors since his appearances on Channel 4's late night magic show Dirty Tricks, while hecklers are warned to beware of the razor-sharp and often confrontational Peacock.

The Scottish Falsetto Sock Puppet Theatre presents an extraordinary show featuring songs, sketches, socks, violence and Shakespeare. They will also be performing a family-friendly show at 2pm on Sunday.

Bank Holiday Monday offers comedy for kids with James Campbell, the world's only stand-up for children, starting at 11.30am. The festival draws to a close with the return of The Noise Next Door at 3pm. To book tickets call 01303 858500 or visit www.standupfolkestone.com.



with
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There will be plenty of Tudor-themed activities, courtesy of Hands on History, including cannon drill, archery practice and mini jousts for children.

Tickets cost £16.50/£13.50 for adults and £9.50 for children, while under-fours go free. For details call 01622 765400 or go to www.leeds-castle.com.



ULF HOELSCHER

Saturday, May 23
Mote Hall, Maidstone Leisure Centre

RENNED German violinist Ulf Hoelscher joins Maidstone Symphony Orchestra for the finale of its 98th concert season.

Hoelscher returns to play two popular works, Samuel Barber's The Violin Concerto and the Introduction and Rondo Capriccio' by Saint-Saens. The concert will also feature Leonard Bernstein's West Side Story Symphonic Dances, Fauré's Pavane and Ravel's Daphnis & Chloe Suite No 2.

After studying with the famous teacher Max Rostal in Cologne, Hoelscher spent three years in the US before returning to Europe, where he would become one of the leading violinists of his generation. The diversity of his recordings with EMI reflect his broad repertoire, which has seen him performing in the world's most important



musical centres and touring extensively in Europe, Russia, the Far East, Australia, East Germany and Japan.

The concert starts at 7.30pm and tickets are

priced from £12 to £21 or £5 for students. To book call the Membership Secretaries on 01622 736392, call the leisure centre box office on 0845 155 2277 or visit www.mso.org.uk.

PROMS IN THE PARK

Saturday, May 23
Whatman Millennium Park, Maidstone

GET ready to wave that flag and raise your voice in celebration at this year's Proms In The Park.

Families and prom-goers are invited to bring along a picnic and join in the fun at the annual event, which will be providing an evening of great musical entertainment. Best of all, the event is free, so all the family can enjoy wonderful music with no charge.

All the usual stirring favourites from the Last Night of the Proms can be heard, including Rule Britannia, Jerusalem and Land of Hope and Glory. There will also be the chance for the audience to join in with Queen, Abba and Oliver! medleys, becoming a 1,000-strong chorus with Phantom of the Opera star, Jill Washington.

People can enjoy picnics from 4pm, allowing plenty of time to prepare for the concert which starts at 7.30pm. A firework finale will bring the event to a close at about 9.15pm.

For more information call Hazlitt Arts Centre on 01622 758611 or visit www.hazlittartscentre.co.uk.

MAIDSTONE LEISURE

Hear old school tunes at reunion evenings

TOMORROW'S event at the Beluga Bar in Bank Street is for anyone who left the following schools between 2000 and 2002: The Cornwallis School, The Malling School, Maplesden Noakes School and Sutton Valence School.

With DJs spinning the hits from the appropriate school years, the event starts at 8pm and entry is free before 11pm. Reunion groups are on Facebook.

Hear the true tale of Prostitutes Padre

THE true story of the Prostitutes Padre is presented as a music hall show in The Missionary's Position.

Penny Dreadful tells the tale of the Rector of Stiffkey, who spent six days a week ministering to the needs of London's scarlet women in the 1900s. The show is at the Trinity Theatre, Tunbridge Wells, 8pm Friday. Tickets cost £12.50/£10.50. Book at www.trinitytheatre.net or 01892 678678.

Hear the cream of rock and roll at tribute night

CELEBRATE the career of a guitar legend with the Cream of Clapton Tribute Show at Maidstone's Exchange Studio.

Considered by many to be one of the greatest guitar artists, Eric Clapton has been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame an unprecedented three times. The show starts at 7.30pm on Friday. Tickets cost £15/£14. Book at www.hazlittartscentre.co.uk or call 01622 758611.

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Edward, lives in the Lark Hall retirement home run by his parents. The boy's solitude is interrupted with the arrival of grieving widower Clarence, a retired magician who doesn't suffer children gladly.

HANNAH MONTANA - THE MOVIE (U)



Miley Cyrus searches for love in this rites of passage drama, interspersed with musical sequences. The movie promotes the family unit and the value of enduring friendship ahead of material wealth.

Star Trek's revival has a message for our times

■ BY KATE WHITING

MORE than four decades, six TV series and ten films since the crew of the Enterprise first pledged 'to boldly go where no man has been before', Captain Kirk and his pointy-eared sidekick Spock are back.

The original 1966 series wasn't an instant hit, but such is the impact of Star Trek on modern culture, that even the staunchest non-fan could pull a Vulcan salute and would know that if you need beaming up, Scotty's your man.

So how do you tackle a new film to bring the brand back up to warp speed and attract a new generation of fans, without offending Trekkies at the same time?

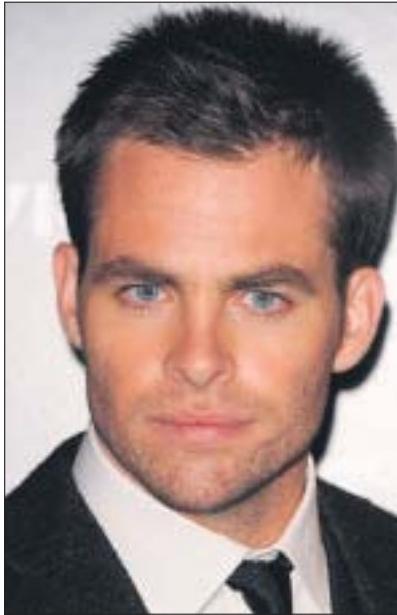
Find a young, hip cast worthy of wearing the iconic primary colour Lycra tops and bring back Leonard Nimoy to pass the Spock baton to Heroes' star Zachary Quinto, is how.

This was the mission Lost creator JJ Abrams' boldly embarked on. The self-proclaimed non-fan also decided to take the franchise back to its roots, showing the 23rd century launch of the U.S.S. Enterprise and how its crew all came to be there.

Central to the film is the relationship between James T Kirk, made famous by William Shatner, and his one-day First Officer, who goes only by the name Spock.

From the moment they meet at the Starfleet Academy, there's no love lost, with Kirk – played by rising star Chris Pine – calling Spock a "pointy-eared b*****d".

Like other origins movies, including Batman Begins, JJ takes us back to his characters' childhoods to show us what shapes and motivates them.



BOLDLY GOING: Chris Pine stars as Captain Kirk

The film opens with Kirk's birth, as his father, captain of the doomed U.S.S. Kelvin is locked in battle with a rogue Romulan ship.

Flash forward to Kirk on Earth as a young man, in a bloody bar brawl with students of the Starfleet Academy after trying to chat up Uhura (Zoe Saldana).

He finally gets inspired to make something of his life by Captain Pike (Bruce Greenwood), who challenges him to fulfil his father's thwarted potential.

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Meanwhile, on the planet Vulcan, young Spock is being bullied by his classmates because he's half human and half Vulcan.

At the Starfleet Academy, Spock despises Kirk's impulsiveness and Kirk is equally frustrated by the officious Spock.

Chris Pine, 28, explains: "Zach and I wanted the audience to see two very bright, very obstinate young men who are destined to butt heads throughout their lives, but will grow to love each other for that very reason."

Chris is sure the film, like the original series, will impress and endure.

"Right now in an economic crisis, to present a vision of people working together instead of division, I just think it's a positive, wonderful message."

STAR TREK
Certificate 12A

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- Is working from home a cheaper option?
- Get an index-linked return on savings
- EU speaks out for small business
- Reasons behind company paid assistance
- Only one way for mortgage rates to go

- Three points of survival
- Communication is key in a downturn
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Reaction to the Government's £2,000 incentive towards scrapping an older car in return for a new one was lukewarm from trade and customers alike. Find out how some car makers have embraced the scrappage programme and how you can benefit from the new system when purchasing a new motor

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■ Village Hotel in Maidstone is offering complimentary day pass for the Leisure Club

■ Aylesford Self Storage in Aylesford is offering free man and a van for clients renting storage for longer than three months

■ County Garage in Herne Bay is offering 15 per cent off any Ford accessories. Includes car mats, mudflaps, boot protectors, scuff plates, alloy wheels, roof bars, chrome tailpipe finisher, dog guards, roof boxes, parking sensors

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Good advice for difficult times

THE experts can't seem to agree – one day we are told the green shoots of recovery are peeping through, the next they are nowhere to be seen.

Whatever the truth, it's certainly going to be a while before we

are all sleeping easy in our beds again and there are still plenty of choppy waters to deal with.

That's why this latest edition of Money Matters has plenty of good advice for consumers and businesses who are all looking to reduce their costs, save money and do some serious planning for the future.

And don't forget to log onto vouchersforkent.co.uk for some great offers to save you cash.

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Follow Dad's Army to defeat the recession

By **TONY PATEY**

DON'T panic, Mr Mainwaring – one in every three South East small business bosses are evoking the Blitz-type attitude and keeping their chins up as the economic bombs rain down during the recession.

They're refusing to let the recession get them down, insisting it has had no impact on their personal lives, according to new research from independent financier Bibby Financial Services.

However, that does mean that two out of every three seem to have the opposite view ...

Anyway, many business owners in the South East are adopting various ways of coping:

- 47 per cent are refusing to cut out what could be seen as luxuries, such as Blackberries or company cars, which they clearly see as essential
- 69 per cent are continuing with holiday
- plans or other time off
- 76 per cent are not getting any less sleep
- 71 per cent are not seeing any less of their family
- 82 per cent are maintaining a healthy lifestyle
- just 12 per cent are drinking more alcohol.



Andy Leopold, Bibby's spokesperson for the



MILITARY STYLE: Businesspeople are taking Corporal Jones' advice and refusing to panic, in fact many of them are hanging onto their 'luxuries' like Blackberries and company cars

South East said: "Some might consider a Blackberry or company car a luxury, but for many small business owners in the South East today these are simply essentials which are helping with the day-to-day running of their business."

"Whereas previously business owners in the region may have been prepared to neglect their personal lives in order to sustain their business, these days they recognise the importance of trying to maintain some sort of work life balance, instead seeing time away from the business, such as holiday, as a tool to help them survive."

"However, while it's good to see business owners in the South East remaining positive, they also need to be prudent financially to get

through the downturn and not completely throw caution to the wind."

"With 77 per cent of business owners in the region now scrutinising finances more carefully, it's clear cash flow remains king. Luckily there are still plenty of ways for the region's business owners to stay on top of cash-flow issues and ensure those close to them don't suffer in the process."

Indeed, all but 11 per cent of business owners in the South East polled say they have learned something new from the experience of this recession. Thirty three per cent have learned to keep a closer eye on cash flow, 26 per cent have learned to plan better for the future and 14 per cent say they have become more shrewd.

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Don't let debt recovery drag your business down

By DAVID GREEN

EVEN for companies currently managing to weather the economic storm there are still many challenges to face.

Not least is the fact that overdue bills or worse still, customer debts, are spiralling out of control.

Ultimately, debt recovery is becoming one huge headache and more businesses than ever are having to spend their time chasing debt.

Overdue bills can be a nightmare to manage, and if you're a smaller business whose survival is dependant on regular cash flow, the urgency of the situation is magnified.

A good cash flow is critical for companies to be able to pay their staff and suppliers; not to mention if they are to have any hope at all of generating income for the owners and shareholders of the business.

Taking the right steps from the outset will allow you to maximise getting the money rightly owed to you without damaging your business relationships.

The first step is to ensure your terms and conditions are clear regarding payment, and if you are going to use an external company to collect overdue payments, make your intentions clear to your customer so there can be no misunderstandings.



CHALLENGES: Take the right steps to maximise the chances of getting money owed to you

tions clear to your customer so there can be no misunderstandings.

A solution needs to be put into action swiftly to give you every chance of getting your money back at the lowest cost to you.

Many businesses find it hard to chase a customer for the debts, particularly where the customer is another business, as there is a risk that attempts to recover debts will be seen as aggressive and relationships can sour.

Many companies lack confidence in making heavier demands for payment. Fears of losing future business coupled with emotional baggage can all too often interfere with this process.

But it is important not to lose sight of the fact the customer has failed to pay you the money they owe and you simply can't afford to jeopardise the financial stability of your own business or allow them to spiral into further debt.

These concerns can be avoided by a simple and effective recovery plan.

As the payment terms near their end, a 'friendly' phone call can, if necessary, be followed up in writing to instigate a gentle reminder of the outstanding payment due

and to re-emphasise your payment terms.

What has to be avoided is continual phone calls and letters chasing a debt as this wastes your time and stops you from concentrating on new business.

Enlisting the help of a recovery agent or a professional solicitor at the early stages could be beneficial in terms of saving you time and money in the long term, and it takes away the hassle and emotional concerns which often materialise.

However, debt collection agencies will usually charge a percentage of the total debt, which means they are likely to cherry-pick those larger debts and cases that will bring them a good guaranteed return, and this can be a costly option.

In our view, the most efficient debt recovery model is to use a combination of all the various options, but don't be afraid to allow those representing you to take the action that is necessary to recover the debt.

Knowing the right path to choose with a debt and what action to take if, and when, a judgement is obtained is extremely important as many cases get to judgement and then are unable to be enforced.

Debt recovery is not an exact science, but experience is all important.

• **David Green is spokesman for MTA Solicitors, which has an office in Bromley.**

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Home is where the office is



By JOHN GUTHRIE and DOUG SKILTON

WITH the dole queue getting longer and recession-battling bosses seeking ways to cut costs, increasing numbers of people are starting to work from home.

As many as one in seven of the working population are now homeworkers.

The attractions of remote working are clear: the potential release from rental overheads and the freeing up of commuting time.

But there are practical and legal issues which must be balanced against the saving from office overheads before setting aside part of the home for business use.

We'd like to consider those who work totally from home as opposed to the occasional home worker. In many cases internal alterations will be carried out to the home to facilitate that remote working.

Planning permission is required when-

ever there is a material change in the planning use of a property. It is a matter of fact and degree in each case whether there has been such a change.

The key question for people intending to run a business from home is whether the overall character of the house will change from being a private home as a result of the business.

The most important factor to consider is the question of whether the business use is subservient to the residential use. The right to use land for a primary planning use includes the right to use it for a subservient or 'ancillary' use.

However, there is no hard-and-fast rule for deciding the point at which running a business from home will fall outside the scope of ancillary use.

Much will turn on the nature of the business use, but judicial guidance suggests that anyone using more than 10 per cent of their home for business use could be at risk of requiring separate planning permission.

Planning permission may also be required for any physical alterations that are needed to make the property suitable for the business use.

Compliance with building regulations will also be needed if there are



any changes to the home. As an example, a hairdresser who decides to run their business from home should remember that not only do structural changes in the property require Building Regulation Consent but also simpler measures such as the installation of a washbasin.

Business rates, as opposed to council tax, will apply to the part of the home used exclusively for business.

Remote workers should consider getting a separate phone line for their business to claim tax relief on business calls and also about reclaiming VAT on anything bought for business purposes.

A remote worker should always check both their deeds and mortgage conditions, or their rental agreement, to ensure that there are no restrictions against running a business from home.

If necessary they should apply for consent under the deeds and mortgage.

Rubbish (often overlooked) is another problem area and business waste should not be put in domestic refuse bins. Plastic business waste bags can be expensive.

From a practical viewpoint, will customers of the business visit the home and upset the neighbours? If it is necessary to have client meetings should they be at the client's premises instead?

Finally, remember to check that using your home for business will not invalidate your buildings insurance policy.

- *John Guthrie is an associate and Doug Skilton is a solicitor at Tunbridge Wells based Thomson Snell & Passmore.*

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Guaranteeing a return for your savings

By JEREMY GATES

IF YOU believe our economy sits on a powder keg of inflation – and some fear its return might be the only salvation for Britain if Government plans to borrow £700 billion are carried through – there are sound arguments for savings which guarantee an index-linked return.

If they ponder Chancellor Alistair Darling's words carefully, savers might want an alternative to banks or building societies for part of their savings. In any case, the three per cent plus fixed-rate returns, now on offer from these institutions over two or three years, could look mean if inflation takes off.

It was therefore not coincidental that National Savings & Investments (NS&I) offered two new issues of Inflation Beating Savings certificates last week. Also called Index-linked

certificates, they enable savers to invest a maximum £15,000 per issue in three-year (19th issue) or five-year (46th issue) certificates.

Dax Harkins, NS&I senior savings strategist says they usually make a new issue of Index-linked certificates when they change the rate: "In this instance, the rate stays the same – Retail Prices Index (RPI) plus one per cent – if held for the full term, but investors wanted a new issue to allow them to put more money in."

Opportunity

As NS&I certificates are tax free, the equivalent rate is index-linking plus 1.25 per cent for basic rate taxpayers, and index-linking plus 1.67 per cent for higher rate taxpayers. On each anniversary, interest and index-linking are added to the certificate.

The last issue was in June, 2008, which effectively means NS&I offers an opportunity to salt away up to £15,000 per person per year, or £30,000 per couple, with returns free of income tax and capital gains tax (CGT), like ISAs.

Many savers value 100 per cent security for their cash. Index-linked Savings Certificates



SET: Putting your cash in National Savings & Investments certificates could be the answer

were launched by NS&I in 1975, and 600,000 investors hold £16bn in them against £39bn in Premium Bonds, which get more promotion.

With Premium Bond prizes falling to just one per cent, new £25 prizes have been introduced to ensure Bond holders win nearly one million prizes per month. With 39 billion Premium Bonds in circulation, the odds on any single bond winning are 36,000-1.

As Premium Bonds lose some appeal, the threat of inflation makes Index-linked certificates more attractive. If RPI goes negative they still guarantee the annual one per cent bonus on investments held to the end of their term. In fact, this is the first time a continuous period of deflation has been experienced since NS&I launched index-linked certificates.

With personal tax levels certain to rise after the next General Election, there is a strong case for using NS&I products to hold more savings outside the tax net. However, savers should remember Inflation Beating Savings pay no interest at all on withdrawals after one year, with returns thereafter weighted to favour those who remain for the full term.

"It won't have you jumping up and down with excitement, but this product already pays a better return than many instant access savings accounts, and returns could look good if inflation kicks in, maybe 18 months from now," Mark Dampier at Hargreaves Lansdown said.

Clearer

Kevin Mountford, Moneysupermarket.com, says NS&I products should be in any balanced savings portfolio: "With index-linking, you have the prospect of a fixed return, as opposed to accounts which are market-leading one moment and stragglers a few months later."

"Here there is the prospect of a definite return, over and above the cost of living."

Andrew Hagger, Moneynet.co.uk, says for savers purely concerned with inflation, it's a good home for your money. But he is not sure he would tie up money for that long at present: "Consider the West Bromwich BS E-Bond, paying 4.3 per cent before tax on a one-year bond (min £5,000), or perhaps ICICI Bank's Instant Access paying 2.45 per cent on a minimum £1, until the trend on rates becomes clearer."

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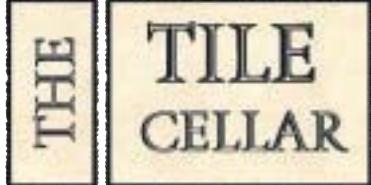
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EU acts to help small companies

By **GÜNTER VERHEUGEN**

European Commission Vice President, responsible for enterprise and industry policy

IN THIS present economic crisis everybody speaks about job losses in the big industries and big companies.

Governments are keen to take action and to find ways to support them. But there is also another side of the coin: who cares about the millions of small enterprises which are struggling for survival? I do.

Because I know, without entrepreneurs there are no enterprises, without enterprises there are no jobs. And, therefore, I am convinced that in the crisis we must strengthen our efforts to give small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) the best possible framework-conditions.

Not being paid for the goods and services delivered is bad for a business in any circumstances, but becomes dramatic today as the economic crisis reduces alternative sources of finance and diminishes demand. The distance to bankruptcy can get dangerously short.

As government at all levels puts imagination to work looking for any useful measure to counter the crisis, they should not forget about the simplest – avoid the huge amount of invoices for the purchase of goods and services which they pay late after delivery.

That is why the Commission has decided it was time to upgrade EU rules on late payment in commercial transactions and proposed public authorities should as a rule pay their bills within a maximum of 30 days.

An incentive to clear the bills in time the



SMALL THINGS: Günter Verheugen sees the value of entrepreneurs and small enterprises

Commission suggests introducing a flat-rate compensation of five per cent cumulated with the late payment interest. In parallel, the European Commission commits itself to speed

up its own payment for the purchase of goods and services.

The proposal on late payments is only the latest in a series of initiatives to help SMEs taken by this European Commission since it took office in 2004 and which culminated with the proposal of the Small Business Act (SBA) in June of last year. This has found the agreement of all member States and the European Parliament.

The SBA puts forward a complete policy framework to improve the overall approach to entrepreneurship and to promote SMEs' growth by helping them tackle the remaining problems which hamper their development.

The act applies to all companies which have fewer than 250 employees: 23 million across the EU.

Key to this new policy framework is the application of the Think Small First principle. Henceforth, all public authorities in the EU are called to ensure that SMEs' interests are always taken into account in policy making.

The Commission has revised state aid rules to encourage Member States to do more for SMEs since public funding for training, research and development, environmental protection and other types of aid is important for SMEs.

We have proposed a new statute for a European Private Company which will allow SMEs to start up and operate according to the same company law provisions throughout the European Union.

Finally, I am happy to add that the Member States agreed to open up the option to apply reduced Value Added Tax rates for locally supplied services, including labour intensive services, such as hairdressing, catering, and repair.

To encourage and inspire new entrepreneurs

who are planning to set up a new business, we have also launched an Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs – a European exchange programme to help entrepreneurs acquire relevant skills for managing an SME by spending time working in another EU country with an experienced entrepreneur.

To free the hands of SMEs, we are cutting administrative burdens with full speed, eyeing the target to reduce administrative burdens on companies stemming from EU legislation by 25 per cent by 2012.

For example, in January the Commission adopted a proposal for a revision of the VAT Directive to remove the barriers to electronic invoicing. The yearly reduction potential could be as high as 18 billion euros in the mid-term.

Extra savings

In the case of company law, the Commission proposed to allow Member States to exclude micro-enterprises, with ten employees or less, from the scope of EU accounting directives, which could bring additional savings of seven billion Euros.

Moreover 24 Member States have given themselves a better regulation agenda.

Since access to finance is essential for SMEs, notably in times of crisis, the European Investment Bank devoted 30 billion euros to SMEs in Europe in the form of new loans granted via commercial banks. This scheme, approved at the end of 2008, is actively supported by the European Commission.

Now is the time, once and for all, to cement the needs of SMEs in EU policy. To get out of the current crisis we need to clear the path for those who want to create more jobs and are the key drivers of innovation, who will need to master the shift towards a low carbon economy.

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TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY TO ALL OFFERS

Firms are helping you out to help themselves

By **TONY PATEY**

THE truth always comes out – and when firms dip into their pockets to help staff being booted out the door through no fault of their own it's not because the companies are being nice and kind.

The real reasons, according to one of our biggest recruitment consultancies, are to maintain a good reputation, hold onto key employees – and help managers to deliver the bad news.

It's euphemistically called outplacement, but it basically means easing unwanted or unneeded executives out of a company by pro-

viding company-paid assistance in finding them new jobs.

With short-term strategy firms cutting back on staff – as they always do come an economic downturn – more individuals are getting this type of support.

Now a study by Reed Consulting has revealed that aside from what it says is the moral obligation, there are many reasons why firms cough up to offer help.

A company spokesman: "In the event of a firm having to make redundancies, there is always the risk its reputation among potential employees and customers will be damaged.

"Three-quarters of firms felt provision of outplacement could improve the organisation's reputation, while a half believed it could help make them be seen as an employer of choice."

Also, perversely, firms think it helps them



REPUTATION: Employers help staff move on because they feel it encourages others to stay with them

retain staff. "Given its common proximity to redundancy programmes, respondents felt the provision of outplacement support helped the employer retain and motivate those staff not directly affected.

"It is a commonly held view that up to 25 per cent of top performers leave an organisation within 90 days of a major change announcement being made. Two-thirds of respondents agreed that offering outplacement support for staff being made redundant helped retain those who remained."

The study also found that more than 70 per cent of employers believe offering outplacement helps line managers implement redundancies "with a clearer conscience" and 87 per cent of those interviewed felt it eased the pressure on them.

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Are mortgage rates about to start going up?

EIGHT weeks after the base rate hit a mind-boggling 0.5 per cent, last week's decision by the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to leave rates unchanged hardens the consensus that mortgage rates go one way from here – up.

On the way down, tracker loans were a smart move for borrowers, shrinking monthly repayments close to zero in some cases.

As a new order takes shape, fixed-rate loans look a good defensive move for borrowers who fear rates, when they rise again, could stay high for some time.

Among lenders, there's a spring 'nip' in the air; a sense the worst is behind us.

Gloom began to lift in mid-April when our biggest lender, Halifax, offered to pay up to £1,000 of a homebuyer's council tax for a year to any borrower taking a mortgage with a deposit of at least 10 per cent.

Are lenders actually keen to find new customers with house prices still falling, possibly by eight to 10 per cent for the rest of 2009? Plainly they are, because rivals have followed Halifax's lead.

Woolwich, the lending arm of Barclays, has slashed rates on two, three, four and five-year fixes, starting at 3.69 per cent for two years (to maximum loan to value (LTV) of 70 per cent).

For remortgagors (max LTV 75 per cent), Abbey reckons its three-year fix at 4.09 per cent, seven-year at 4.99 per cent and 15-year at 5.38 per cent, are its lowest in a decade.

Abbey's Nici Auchlam-Gardiner says their research shows that for remortgagors, a third are looking for a tracker, and over half will choose a two-year tracker.

"With a best buy rate of Base Rate plus 2.45 per cent, borrowers should also seriously consider the two-year tracker."

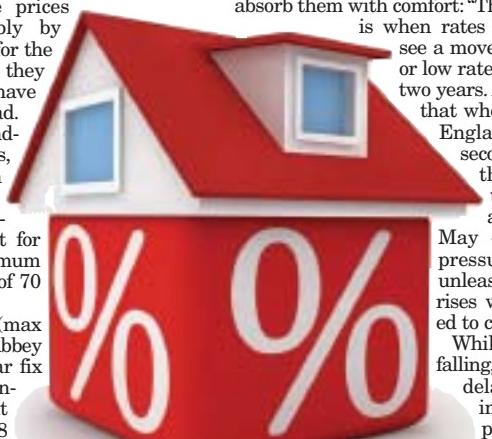
Andrew Hagger at MoneyNet.co.uk isn't so sure: "There is a feeling trackers won't look so good once rates move up again. New trackers around 2.5 per cent over base mean a rate of 5.5 per cent if base rate gets back to three per cent," he says.

And trackers often have Early Repayment Charges lurking in the small print, expensive when borrowers get another loan.

Fee-free deals are back in fashion too: Yorkshire Bank offers remortgages with no arrangement fees on fixed-rate, offset and current account loans.

But Hagger says fee free is not always cheapest: "On a £150,000 loan over 25 years (75 per cent LTV), for instance, an HSBC fix at 3.99 per cent with a £599 fee costs £1,570 less over three years than Alliance & Leicester's fee free loan at 4.69 per cent."

Perhaps the most encouraging sign mortgage markets are easing is HSBC's £1bn offered as 90 per cent LTV loans – a two-year



By JEREMY GATES

fix at 4.99 per cent (fee £1,499), a two-year fix at 5.49 per cent (fee £199) and a lifetime tracker at 4.09 per cent plus base rate (currently 4.59 per cent) with non-refundable fee of £999. To qualify, HSBC borrowers must open a current account, which charges a monthly fee – and with access to current account details, the bank could make further efforts to sell financial products.

HSBC, with its first direct subsidiary, could take 13 per cent of the 2009 mortgage market – against three per cent in 2007. It isn't saddled with unprofitable mortgages hitting rival lenders who grabbed market share before boom turned to bust.

Ray Boulger at brokers John Charcol says households should focus on two strategies at this stage. Firstly, money saved on low mortgage rates should go to pay outstanding debt on mortgages, credit cards, and other loans. Don't splurge on luxuries and holidays.

Secondly, rates will be higher than they are today, so borrowers should be in a position to absorb them with comfort: "The key question is when rates rise. We could

see a move in early-2010, or low rates could stay for two years. A big danger is that when the Bank of England injects its second £75bn into the economy – the first expires at the end of May – inflationary pressures could be unleashed, and rate rises would be needed to control them."

Whilst prices keep falling, borrowers who delay remortgaging could have problems finding a new loan in a year, if they need a higher LTV because of falling values.

Darren Cook at Moneyfacts.co.uk is equally fearful that lenders' big concern is to play safe: "Banks, far from predicting the end of the slump, are hedging bets by increasing the number of their best mortgages to those fortunate enough to have a 40 per cent deposit. The average mortgage rate for a 60 per cent LTV is 4.29 per cent, compared to 5.29 per cent six months ago, and availability within this tier has risen too."

Boulger says some borrowers might still take a tracker loan with a 'droplock' option enabling them to lock into a fix later. There is a case, for example, for taking an HSBC tracker and switching when HSBC offers fixes for longer than two years. But borrowers may have to pay more for a higher LTV limit.

"People keen to remortgage get a nasty shock from valuations at five to 10 per cent lower than they expected," says Boulger. "My advice, if you have equity of less than 30 per cent, is to fix straightforward and in most cases, to take a five-year fix, which will look cheap if rates stay high for two to three years."

"Borrowers on low LTVs (below 75 per cent) may have a case for not rushing into a fix. They should keep an eye on available deals, to fix in late-2009/early-2010."

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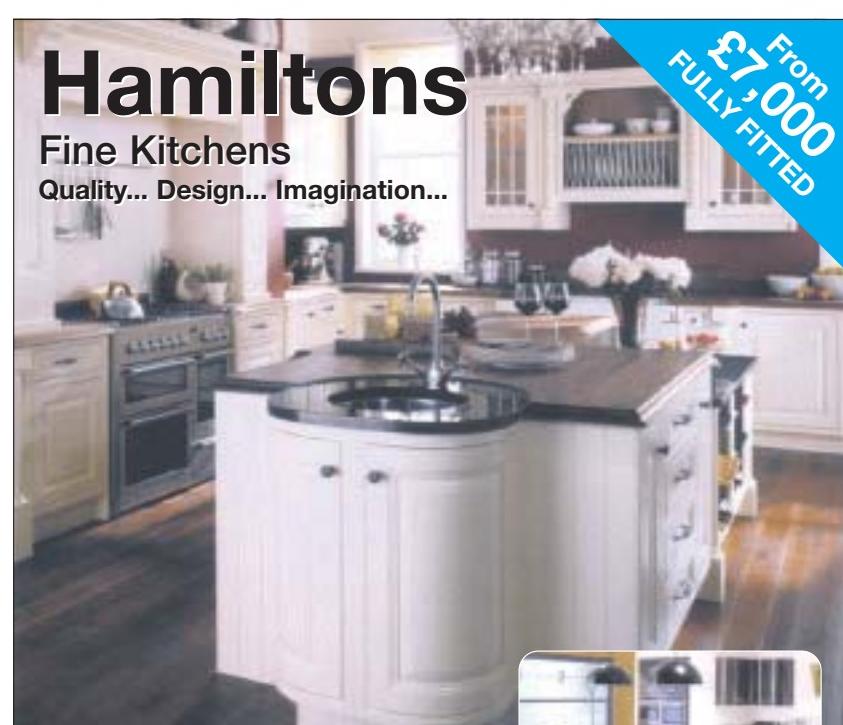
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Make a confident investment in key areas of business

KENT'S business advisory service Business Link, says there are three areas to focus on if you want your firm to survive in the downturn.

The report Through the Recesssion by research company Opinion Matters highlighted the fact that businesses which are confident about their future had increased or maintained levels of investment in one of the three key areas; IT, marketing and training.

Investment does not necessarily mean a big cash outlay. It can be an investment of time, resources and knowledge focus – making the most of affordable options freely available through general purpose technology such as the internet.

Almost half of all successful businesses surveyed (47 per cent) had kept up investment in IT, indicating the IT infrastructure they had in place was helping to keep the workforce optimised for success.

For example, businesses with a mobile-enabled workforce were found to be 60 per cent more likely to forecast an increase in growth during the next 12 months – indicating the vital role flexible working practices



DEVELOPMENT: IT is one of three key areas worth focusing on for the future

and technologies play in successful business.

Among successful businesses, 43 per cent had actually increased investment in marketing, contributing to their success and long-term prospects.

You can get up to date with the latest low-cost online marketing trends at a sales and marketing event near you.

Rather than cutting training budgets over the past 12 months, successful businesses were more likely to have increased investment, with 39 per cent of these actually spending more on training in the last 12 months than ever before.

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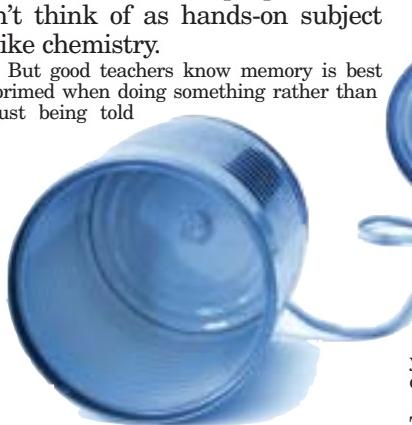
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Keep people in the know

By **TONY PATEY**

CLASSROOMS can be crucibles of delight – and angst – when it comes to doing ‘practicals’, especially in something like business studies, which most people wouldn’t think of as hands-on subject like chemistry.

But good teachers know memory is best primed when doing something rather than just being told



about it, and business studies is no exception. Take communication, one of the most important management tools.

I used to start my A-level communication module with Chinese whispers – sticking a student in each corner of the room and getting them to verbally pass round a short message I wrote down for the first person to memorise.

We all know the party game – the message ends up totally distorted at the end when the last student says what they had been told.

I once did it with Chinese students; it blew their minds, because in China they had to sit, listen and learn by rote. Actually physically doing something like this was alien, almost embarrassing, for them – but the lesson was still learnt.

When you’re running a business, word-of-mouth rumours can get out of hand and badly damage, even ruin, you. Send out the right message, in the right way, to internal and external stakeholders. And it’s even more important in an economic downturn.

As a reporter I’ve had emails about what was going to happen in newspaper groups at the other end of the country – and when the announcements came I found the info I had received was only vaguely right.

A rumour once swept round the world – in minutes – in the 80s that “Reagan was dead” – panic in all the markets, Wall Street and our stock exchange went berserk. But it was another Regan, different spelling, in the US administration – not dear old Ronnie.

It can be easy to hide, take a quick holiday perhaps, when there’s bad news to give out, even just to keep inside your office and hope the world’ll go away. But it doesn’t work.

“Do not hide,” is the advice of Paul A Argenti, professor of corporate communication at Tuck School of Business, Dartmouth College. “Not hearing from you will breed additional suspicion and mistrust among stakeholders.”

Communicate often and early, he says, and talk to people directly – hearing information straight from the horse’s mouth gives reassurance and stops distortion – and people can question you directly, not second-hand. That alone can diffuse difficult situations.

Also, he says, get inside the media’s head. Try seeing how the press might spin your message.

A difficult one, that. A lot depends on the medium, and this is where some really specialised knowledge is called for, usually from someone in PR who has had a lot of experience as a journalist or broadcaster.

What they should tell you is that trying to put a gloss on something that doesn’t need it will soon be swept aside, and the information will be seen for what it is.

Very few people have succeeded in hoodwinking the media over bad news – the only time I’ve ever seen it done was when Harold Wilson was prime minister in the 70s.

Inflation was rocketing, shock horror. Mr Wilson, a very clever man, brought in the first index-linked savings certificates – they were called Granny Bonds because they were for retired people (but, of course, everyone gave money to their grannies to cash in on them).

The media gave the thumbs-up because people now had the chance to make some money. Until some maverick City reporter on a tabloid stood up at a press conference and asked: “Isn’t this giving people a vested interest in rising inflation, when we should be doing everything we can to bring it down?”

No guesses for who that was...

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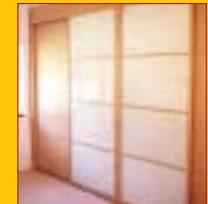
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Discover how a school banking project is helping youngsters prepare for looking after their own finances

Essential guide to where you can save

■ Living Out log cabin store in Chestfield, Maidstone, is offering 15 per cent off plus free delivery on all DIY log cabins

■ County Garage Motors in Herne Bay is offering free protection pack worth up to £400. Free full tank of fuel, free Gard X Paint and interior protection, free front and rear mats, on all new or used vehicles

■ Wells Clinic in Ashford is offering £50 off skin lifting and tightening lines and wrinkle treatments. Wrinkle reduction (b/tox)

■ Baileys Nissan in Canterbury is offering 15 per cent off all servicing

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TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY TO ALL OFFERS

By TONY PATEY

EVEN in the good times companies close or are taken over. So, if the worst does happen, what do you need to do?

Business Link has the following advice about the key points you will need to consider if you are thinking of selling or closing.

Who you need to tell

Your tax and any official records concerning your business will need to be up to date and complete when you sell your company.

You should also inform all your customers and suppliers so they have the chance to raise any outstanding payments, credits and liabilities, and you can account for them when you finalise your accounts and tax affairs.

You will need to follow the necessary statutory procedures and form filling to resolve any outstanding tax, VAT and National Insurance matters with HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC).

If you are selling a company and there will be changes to its secretary or directors, you must inform Companies House.

If you employ more than 50 people you will also need to take account of the Information and Consultation of Employees (ICE) Regulations.

Employees

You have obligations to safeguard their rights, finalise their pay and deductions, and issue their P45 form. You may also be able to offer them help in coping with the challenges arising from losing their job.



STAFF: As an employer you are obliged to safeguard the rights of your workforce

Tax and VAT when closing

When you close your business, HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) will need to assess how much your final tax bill should be. It is essential to let HMRC know of any possible tax liabilities you have as soon as they are known, even if you are currently unable to pay the tax

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PAPERWORK: Assets will need to be brought up to date for your final day of business

you owe. If business assets are sold and the proceeds go to the individual owners of the business, or if shares in the company are sold, the individuals concerned may have to pay Capital Gains Tax.

If you are VAT registered, you will need to inform HMRC. Once they are satisfied that your registration should be cancelled they will

confirm the date and issue a final VAT return, on which you account for VAT on stock and certain assets on hand at the close of business on the day your registration is cancelled.

Insolvency and bankruptcy

Bankruptcy applies to individuals, and is one route you can take if you are a sole trader

or partner in a partnership and have debts you cannot pay.

It frees you from your debts, but your assets are divided among your creditors and restrictions may be placed on your future business activities by a Bankruptcy Restrictions Order issued by a court if your conduct is considered to have been dishonest or blameworthy – this can last between two years and 15 years.

A company may be forced to close by being taken to court by its creditors, lenders, shareholders, or by the Government or legal authorities seeking to wind up the business.

Alternatively, the owners or directors of the business may decide not to continue operating the business and apply to have the business wound up.

The court may rule that the company is passed into the hands of the Official Receiver. The receiver runs the company in the best interests of creditors and shareholders until its liquidation – ie, the sale of the company's assets. Any money raised is used to pay off the company's debts.

Tax and VAT when selling

You will need to follow the necessary statutory procedures to resolve any outstanding tax, VAT and National Insurance matters with HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC).

When you sell a business, you may have to pay Capital Gains Tax if you made a profit – referred to as a gain – from the sale of the assets. But, if you use the proceeds from the sale to buy another business, you might be able to defer the gain through business asset roll-over relief.

If your company is registered for VAT, contact HMRC and complete form VAT 7 to cancel your registration, or form VAT 68 to transfer your registration to the new owner.

To see this clip, search 'ready meals' @ yourkenttv.co.uk



3min 12sec @ 35Mbps
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Growing your own food is back in fashion, alongside the rediscovery of old fashioned kitchen skills

Essential guide to where you can save

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- A&A Gliderobes in Canterbury is offering up to £100 off

- Avinco Limited in Ramsgate is offering free consultation on digital TV

- KOS is offering goose down surround pillows from only £24.99 inc p&p, save up to £125 on RRP

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Essential guide to where you can save

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TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY TO ALL OFFERS

Divorce doesn't have to split up your business

NOT all problems faced by businesspeople are just in the boardroom and workshop.

If you own a business and you're going through a divorce you can take some comfort from a more realistic approach towards the valuation of your assets, says a Kent lawyer.

Susi Gillespie, a solicitor specialising in divorce at law firm Furley Page, says the change of heart follows a recent High Court judgment where a wife's claim following a 15-year marriage hinged on the estimated value of her husband's restaurant business.

The wife reckoned it was worth £5.3 million and the husband £1.7m. In summing up, the judge stressed that the valuation of a business was an art not a science and ultimately a matter of opinion. He also pointed out that the business in question had been operating successfully at the same site for more than 30 years, so it couldn't be defined as solely matrimonial property.

The judge refuted the wife's unsubstantiated claim that the family had received benefits in kind from the business which were equivalent to £80,000 a year.

Ms Gillespie said: "Detailed evidence from forensic accountants and an expensive dispute over the exact value of the business may be pointless if the business is the means by which the husband is going to earn his income and maintain the family in the future."

"The case also shows that where a business was started before a marriage, the husband



FALL OUT: Susi Gillespie, inset, says the courts are more realistic about business assets

will get some credit for the value it had already acquired so its total value won't be treated as part of the matrimonial pot. Just as important, this case highlights the need for allegations of fringe benefits from a business

to be properly demonstrated if they're going to be reflected in the value of a business."

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BIG SAVINGS: Check out small cars like the Chevrolet Matiz and Mazda2 to cut your fuel bills and emissions – and your road tax

Road tax weapon is blunted but drivers can save money

By STEVE LOADER

GOVERNMENT efforts to use road tax to beat drivers into giving up so-called gas guzzlers have met with mixed success.

There can be no doubt that escalating tax or vehicle excise duty (VED) over the past couple of years has helped fuel downsizing, but there was outcry after the March, 2008, Budget at 'draconian' rates to be applied to larger cars, especially with the recession looming.

Consequently, Chancellor Alistair Darling backtracked last November and proposed amended charges from April 1, 2009, to soften the blow at the top end of the market, though the Government says VED will continue to be amended in future to maintain the downward force in vehicle sizes and emissions.

They will also continue to be based on CO2 emissions rather than fuel consumption and apply only to cars registered after March 1, 2001; inconsistent emissions data on older cars means these are taxed simply at £120/year if the engine is 1,549cc or less and then £185 if it is above – something of a bargain for the owners of large older 'gas guzzlers'

if they are content to bear higher fuel bills, opt for a £1,500-2,000 LPG (liquid petroleum gas) conversion or cover relatively few miles.

The new rates are weighted even more in favour of the latest, cleanest and most miserly small cars. Models emitting 100g/km of CO2 or less, like the new Ford Fiesta ECOnetic, for instance, qualify for Band A or zero rating.

The payable steps are: Bands B and C (101-120g/km) – £35; Bands D and E (121-140g/km) – £120; Band F (141-150g/km) – £125; Band G (151-160g/km) – £150; Bands H and I (161-180g/km) – £175; Bands J and K (181-225g/km) – £215; Band L (226-255g/km) – £405; Band M (255g/km plus) – £405.

Essential guide to where you can save

- Avalanche Flooring Ltd in Strood is offering 10 per cent off carpets
- Wells Clinic in Ashford is offering £25 off removal of skin tags, moles, verrucas, warts, red veins, cysts and skin peels
- KOS is offering an Alex classic light, one of the world's best reading lights, from £84.99. Save up to £30
- Bones on Beds in Herne Bay is offering 10 per cent off mattresses
- KOS is offering a porous seepage hose, save time and money and use up to 70 per cent less water. From only £19.99 save £35 on RRP
- Blakes Hair & Beauty in Canterbury is offering 50 per cent off first appointment (cut and style)
- KOS is offering luxury Egyptian cotton 400-count percale bed linen. Save 40 per cent
- Theatre Royal in Margate is offering two tickets for £20 New English Contemporary Ballet, June 12
- KOS is offering a Karcher pressure washer kit £99.99 including free accessories save £116
- Lexterten furniture store in Westgate-on-Sea is offering £300 off all dining suite orders over £2,000
- Hobbs Parker car auctions company in Ashford is offering cars from £500 every Monday and Wednesday, Orbital Park Ashford

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- Village Hotel in Maidstone is offering half price draft beer or glass of wine with any burger from the new menu
- Blakes Hair & Beauty in Canterbury is offering 15 per cent off any Kersastase

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TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY TO ALL OFFERS

Fuel for thought

THERE are signs that diesel – the wonderfuel of the past – could run out of puff as the race to cut emissions and save money gets tougher.

Its original appeal was the cheapness of the fuel, greater mpg and the better low down pulling power of the engines and their ability to meet tighter emissions legislation.

However, diesel now commands an increasing premium against petrol and there are doubts whether the engines can continue to meet ever tougher emission laws.

Meanwhile, petrol has hit back with smaller, lighter and cleaner engines with turbocharging for flexibility, while there are other options emerging to save money and the planet.

Hybrid

These partner conventional engines with electric units, but two powerplants and power supplies – fuel tank plus batteries – mean extra weight, while production complexity raises prices so buyers must cover many miles to balance this. Motorway mpg is hardly better than a standard car. High toxicity of the batteries is also a worry at the end of the car's life.

LPG

Liquid petroleum gas seems an excellent alternative fuel due to lower duty and emissions and cheaper car tax. However, the



IN THE TANK: Diesel versions of cars like the Peugeot 207 (main picture) have fuelled the drive to small diesels, but is petrol fighting back? Alternatively you can buy a petrol and LPG Proton GEN-2 (top) for the same price as a standard petrol model

calorific value and consequent mpg is slightly lower than petrol and it will cost at least £1,500 to convert an existing vehicle.

There are more LPG filling points across the country than before though and LPG costs about half that of petrol and diesel at the pump and emits less CO₂ and with fewer NOx and particulates.

Electric

These should be cheap to run, but battery technology cannot yet guarantee ranges to sat-

isfy. There is the worry too that emissions are simply transferred from an exhaust pipe to the chimney of a fossil fuel-burning power station.

Biofuels

Fuel derived partly from vegetable matter appeals since plants absorb CO₂ during growth and simply release it again when burned. Most road fuels in the UK will contain at least five per cent biofuel by next year, but there is concern that using arable land to grow 'biofuel' will strain global food supplies.

REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

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2 Cleaner, more efficient cars are cheaper to run.

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3 The Government giving away money.

Okay, so it's the same as reason one, but it's so good we couldn't let it slide. Just hurry, before they change their minds.



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Drive clever – save better

By STEVE LOADER

MAN and machine in harmony can slash pounds off your motoring bill.

The key is to downsize and run a cheaper car and then save even more by smarter driving and journey planning.

Avoid short journeys and get fitter by walking or cycling; a cold engine wastes fuel and can produce 60 per cent more pollution than a warm one and short car journeys require extra servicing and wear the engine faster.

If you must drive then follow these tips from the Institute of Advanced Motorists and RAC Foundation:

- Plan your route to save strain on car and driver. Take the most direct route – a sat nav can help – and go off peak if possible. If you commute, think about car sharing, Park and Ride bus schemes or other public transport.
- Have your vehicle serviced regularly. Neglected engines reduce fuel economy by ten per cent or more. Catalytic converters do clean emissions, but only when they are properly maintained.
- Check tyres – under-inflated tyres need replacing more often (itself an environmental problem), are dangerous and waste fuel. Check pressures weekly.
- Obey speed limits to save money and stay legal. Feather the throttle as you reach cruising speed; 56mph uses 25 per cent less fuel than 70mph and a smoother driving style saves fuel.
- Accelerate briskly without racing the engine – pulling away too fast uses up to 60 per cent more fuel. Intelligent gear changes



SAVINGS: You can cut motoring bills through better driving and downsizing to a city car like the new Nissan Pixo or Skoda Fabia supermini

at modest engine speeds can save up to 15 per cent in fuel.

- Reduce drag – remove roof racks and carriers when not in use. Open windows cause drag and lower fuel economy. Remove unnecessary and heavy boot luggage and accessories and wide tyres that add rolling resistance. Air conditioning costs fuel too so

try to use the fan and vents unassisted.

- Buy green fuel and use less. Look for low sulphur diesel (City diesel) or cleaner petrol (low sulphur/aromatics). Consider a conversion to LPG (liquid petroleum gas) – half the price of petrol and cleaner.
- Think ahead – there is no point rushing and then having to brake suddenly.

- Be a tank miser. Why fill the tank right to the brim and slow down your car by carrying more weight than is necessary?
- Turn off the engine after two minutes to save fuel and emissions if stuck in a jam.
- **For more eco driving tips see Julie Maddocks' online video report at: <http://www.yourkenttv.co.uk/community>.**

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price £20,657. All models shown (excluding Mazda RX-8 R3) feature optional metallic/mica paint (£385). On the road prices include 15% VAT, number plates, delivery, 12 months' road fund licence, 1st registration fee, 3 year or 60,000 mile warranty and 3 years' European Roadside Assistance. Details correct at time of going to print. All models now available with free 7 day drive away insurance.



Essential guide to where you can save

■ Blakes Hair & Beauty in Canterbury is offering 10 per cent discount when booking together a manicure and pedicure plus any two waxings of your choice

■ Maidstone Kia in Maidstone is offering free set of mats with any new car purchased before May 31

■ KOS is offering all-seasons duck duvet, two duvets that button together from only £39.99. Save over 50 per cent

■ Wildlife Heritage Foundation Animal Park in Ashford is offering an amazing day being close to big cats. All-day dedicated guide with buffet lunch, tea/coffee for only £99

■ Robins and Day Motors in Maidstone, Canterbury and Rochester are offering MOTs from £39.99. Service and MOT from £129.99 and seasonal checks from £19.99

■ H&H Flooring in Deal is offering free underlay upgrade on all carpets

■ KOS is offering big button digital cordless phones just £24.99 save £20

■ Canterbury Hyundai in Canterbury is offering £29.95 MOTs while you wait

■ KOS is offering a set of Bypass AND anvil secateurs for just £16.99, save £10

■ KOS is offering a Remington Titanium Washable Shaver only £49.99 inc p&p, save £50 off RRP

By STEVE LOADER

REACTION to the Government's £2,000 incentive towards scrapping an older car in return for a new one was lukewarm from trade and customers alike.

Carmakers and dealers could also be forgiven for biting their lips on learning that they must contribute half the Government's two grand giveaway.

Nevertheless, most of the trade has not only embraced the deal, but put extra incentives on the table, such as even more cash, extra specification and zero per cent finance – though this is no longer a big deal when interest rates are so low.

On the other hand, consumers with savings will know they are receiving precious little return and it is tempting to seek a psychological boost from buying a new motor that should be cheaper to fuel and tax.

Canny buyers will also know they should get a shed-load of discount at the moment, whether or not they currently drive a 'banger' ten years old or more and qualify for the scrapage grant.

Of course, anyone who has a scrapper to cash in has a further bargaining chip not to be tossed lightly into the deal.

Britain's market leader Ford says buyers can expect up to £5,000 off some of its cars, including the scrappage allowance.

Look at the extremes of the market to make the best use of the scheme though. A £2,000 grant buys a lot of any small car like the Hyundai i10 – Germany's scrappage scheme



OFF THE ROAD: The new scheme encourages you to send your old car for scrap

has boosted i10 sales by 662 per cent – and you could not expect usually to get a few hundred quid off when profit margins on small cars match their size. However, a £2,000 handout makes it more affordable to someone on a tight budget and it will be cheaper to fuel and tax and better for the environment.

At the other end of the scale, what about that Beemer you always wanted? Check out a BMW 116d (from £17,605). You would normally struggle to get money off – certainly not £2,000 – and you start saving even more with an average of 60mpg.

Anyone buying a new car is still taking a big step though unless they aim to save longer term though lower fuel bills and road tax.

The Government is using escalating road

tax or VED (vehicle excise duty) to drive people into smaller and cleaner cars and a new scale of zero to £405/year came into force on April 1 (see previous page) and is set to become tougher.

By 2010, gas guzzling limos or 4x4s may face £950 road tax in the first year, although anyone spending £50-100,000 on a car is unlikely to be put off by such a paltry sum. As a result, some manufacturers have produced models exempt from VED, by sneaking below the 100g/km CO₂ emissions mark into band-A.

Most manufacturers also now have an 'Eco' sub-branding for their lowest emission models – Vauxhall uses the ecoFLEX sub-branding.

Brilliant as they are, 'eco' models often cost more since they have diesel engines and spe-

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INCENTIVE: Vauxhall has embraced the Government's scrappage programme, but is topping up the £2,000 treasury/manufacturer grant with cashbacks and other deals on certain models – the popular Corsa supermini qualifies for zero per cent finance as well as grant aid

cial 'green' features that do not yet deliver the economy of scale savings available to makers across the whole model range.

What is more, saving road tax is not such a great incentive when many conventional superminis sit in the lowest road tax band of £35 a year anyway; over three years with an

eco model, saving £105 is irrelevant if you spend more on buying that car and are then putting expensive diesel in the tank.

So, check out conventional equivalents of eco models and don't dismiss petrol power; that fuel is still cheaper and makes sense for low mileage users, while emission and consumption levels

are closing the gap on the diesel equivalents.

Finally, look again at what you have to part-exchange; you might have lost a packet in depreciation on that big 4x4, but work out what it will cost you to run it for the next three years – it might be a lot less than the cost of chopping it for a new car.

Essential guide to where you can save

■ Lexterten furniture store in Westgate-on-Sea is offering £100 off Elevating TV cabinets

■ Old Sawmills furniture store in Ashford is offering 20 per cent off all showroom items

■ Oliver Carpets in Ramsgate and Herne Bay is offering 10 per cent off when you spend more than £250

■ Pomphreys Motors in Bapchild, Sittingbourne is offering half-price MOT with every service

■ Village Hotel in Maidstone is offering £5 off the carvery lunch on any Bank Holiday Monday

■ Living Out log cabin store in Chestfield, Maidstone, is offering free installation on all standard range of cabins

■ Aylesford Self Storage in Aylesford is offering three months' free storage for a year for all new document storage clients

■ County Garage in Herne Bay is offering free health check and free 29-point including wash and vacuum

■ Baileys Nissan Motors in Canterbury is offering 15 per cent off MOTs

■ Medway Stoves solid fuel heating store in Medway is offering 15 per cent off all stoves and installations purchased before June 30, 2009

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MAIDSTONE SHOPPING**Shock horror, author signing at Bluewater**

INTERNATIONAL bestselling teenage horror writer Rachel Caine will be making a rare appearance at Bluewater this weekend.

The author of the Weather Warden and Morganville Vampires books will be signing copies at Waterstone's at 11am on Saturday. The fifth book in the Morganville Vampires series, Lord of Misrule, is not due to be published until July but there is a possibility that copies will be available to buy at the signing.

Fly along to Dove Spa for special promotions

TO celebrate the grand re-opening of Dove Spa Bromley, customers are being offered some very special promotions.

Until May 31, new and existing customers can enjoy a Hydra facial treatment for just £10. Book any Dove Spa Signature facial treatment after the Hydra and receive a free In My Defence Anti Pollution Serum, worth £30.

Virgin Active members will receive a 25 per cent discount during May. Call 0844 800 2152 or visit www.dovespa.co.uk.

It's a Breeze making cash from your junk

A SPRING clear-out could result in extra cash with the help of the new Collectables Manual.

Written by TV presenter, journalist and consultant Jamie Breese, the book uncovers the hidden value in those old toys, phone cards, postcards and ceramics. From Bagpuss to the Beatles, the book helps to identify the gems among the junk.

The Collectables Manual is published by Haynes and is priced at £16.99.

Bring on the barbecue and enjoy the outdoors

ENJOY alfresco dining in the great outdoors during National Barbecue Week.

The annual event runs from bank holiday Monday to Sunday, May 31. With the British public becoming ever more daring with their tastebuds, many are experimenting with more exotic foods than the standard burgers and sausages.

Find inspiration for your barbecue bash online at www.nationalbbqweek.co.uk. More advice on alfresco living can be found at www.gastro-alfresco.co.uk.

Quench kids' thirst with pure Tropicana juices

CHILDREN can quench their thirst and enjoy the goodness of juice with the new kids range from Tropicana.

Tropicana Kids! 100 per cent Juice (£1.99) is a pure, not from concentrate, juice that comes in a handy one-litre size and two tempting flavours – Strawberry & Raspberry and Apple & Blackcurrant.

Perfect for lunch boxes, Tropicana Kids! Juice & Water comes in a multi-pack of six 200ml bottles (£2.49).

See www.tropicanakids.co.uk.

KOS MEDIA READER OFFER**A must have for every home****Ewbank Evolution II Manual Carpet Sweeper**

Ewbank have been producing non-electric carpet sweepers for over a century and their products are still regarded as the best in the world. This Evolution II manual carpet sweeper is no exception. Just as you would expect, it is lightweight and easy to use. It needs no electricity and is an easy and convenient way to clean your carpets and floors at a moment's notice.



The Evolution II is available in silver for £29.99 and makes a perfect companion for your vacuum cleaner.

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■ BY PAUL MCGURK

"JUST listen," says our guide. "Listen to the peace and quiet."

Our boat has ground to a halt in a semi-prehistoric setting on the surface of the Sapoto tributary of the Amazon, a riot of greenery and dark waters all around us.

Then you hear the rustling of trees, the calls of hidden creatures and the buzzing of insects, and realise that this place, a million miles from anywhere, is never, ever quiet.

Welcome to the jungle.

Departing from the jungle city of Iquitos, in Peru, our 60ft MV Delfin riverboat snakes its way along tributaries of the Amazon few people have seen.

Guided by Adonay and Juan-Luis, the

All life carries on up the jungle

sensation of our 20ft skiffs shooting across the brown surface of the river is thrilling enough.

Every conceivable creature is there to be spotted – stripy three-toed sloths, lazy iguanas, white-faced saki monkeys, squirrel monkeys with their post-watershed behaviour and howler monkeys that send out eerie cries.

There are opportunities to catch piranhas with some meat on a stick at the Caro Curahuate tributary.

Charming by day, the river takes on a different, yet alluring, character after sunset.

Creatures appear in the darkness. A clown tree frog is briefly in my hands before it hops

into the undergrowth, while a hairy, pink-toed tarantula crawls up the limb of a tree not four feet away from my head. It's fair to say that the Amazon is not the place to go if you have issues with beasties and creepy crawlies.

With mosquitos in abundance, you will need to be well stocked with repellent, plus anti-malaria medication and other vaccines.

If all this sounds like roughing it, the contrast could not be sharper with the comforts of life aboard the Delfin.

You can relax on the top deck with a pisco sour – a cocktail made with Peru's national spirit – and in the dining room you can enjoy

first-class gourmet meals, including catfish and giant snails served in the shell.

Your first stop in Peru is likely to be the capital Lima. For an overnight stay, the Miraflores Park Hotel by the sea is one of the best options.

Lima is Peru's gastronomic capital, boasting coastal, Andean and even jungle cuisine. With fishing being a major local industry, seafood markets are the ideal place to find fresh fish.

Lima Cathedral, a study in Gothic grandeur, boasts a chilling trip through the catacombs underneath, with the skulls and bones of generations of people buried in its walkways, even as Sunday Mass goes on above.

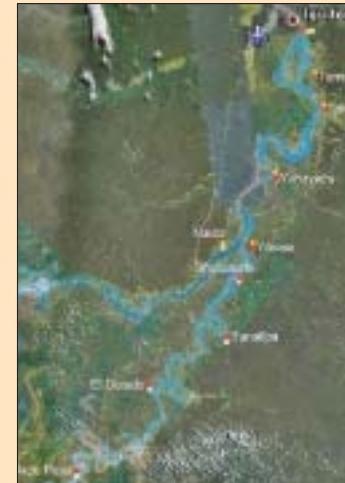
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Time difference	-Five hours (GMT)
Capital	Lima
Language	Spanish
Population	28.2 million
Currency	£1 = 4.6 Nuevo Sol
Religion	Catholic
Climate	Diverse

Travel details

Paul McCurk travelled with Peru's tourist board PromPeru and travel operator Cox & Kings, which offers a six-night tailor-made Amazon Cruise itinerary combining a four-night cruise on the MV Delfin with two nights in Lima, from £2,775 including flights ex-London and Manchester with KLM via Amsterdam and LAN Peru, B&B (full-board on cruise), transfers and excursions. Add £35 supplement ex-Glasgow. Cox & Kings: 0207 873 5000 and www.coxandkings.co.uk. Destination information: see www.peru.info. Yellow fever, typhoid and hepatitis A vaccines are essential, plus plenty of sunblock. High-water season in the Amazon is December-May.



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YOUR TV REVIEW

■ BY JAMES ALEXANDRE

Eurovision Song Contest

BBC1, Saturday, May 16

THERE are few non-sporting events on television big enough to force a postponement of even the best-laid plans.

In my naivety I'd unwittingly scheduled a night out on Saturday, without reckoning on the strangely alluring power of a Norwegian violinist.

Cupid-faced Alexander Rybak wooed the 100 million-plus audience with his whimsical storytelling charm, smashing Eurovision records in the process.

The annual kitsch fest, now in its 53rd year, has undergone some changes including a supposed end to the mutual backslapping between nations which characterised this competition in recent years.

Of even greater significance, the BBC in their wisdom decided to replace the much-loved irreverent commentary of Terry Wogan, whose musings provided as much entertainment as the performers on stage, with that of another Irish chat show host (albeit with mixed results).

Graham Norton was given the task of filling those voluminous shoes and the size of the occasion seemed at first to overwhelm him.

His initial sarcastic put-downs came across as clumsy attempts to emulate the great Wogan, but the increasingly colourful acts on stage helped him naturally assume the great man's mantle.

One wonderfully-wry observation was about how the Ukraine entry's elaborate set-up, which included exotic Roman centurion dancers, required the singer to re-mortgage her home.

Norton seamlessly quipped: "So, if you are looking for a cheap property in the Ukraine area..."

As for the UK effort, our hopes



TOUCH ACT: Norton took over from old Terry

were pinned firmly to rising starlet Jade Ewen. Joined by Andrew Lloyd Webber on piano, her song It's My Time was typical musical grandstanding, a big ballad in the same mould of so many of the impresario's West End shows.

I didn't find it particularly inspiring, but somehow most of Europe's 42 nations dialled up to propel her performance to fifth in the table, the UK's highest finish since 2002.

Disillusioned by our own contribution, I was moved to vote for Turkey's offering, Hadise's Dum Tek Tek which hit all the right notes, so much so the rest of the UK awarded them the honour 'douze' points.

But the ensuing avalanche of support for Norway's new favourite son confirmed why the show still draws in huge numbers.

Despite each country's obvious partiality for their nearest neighbours and the occasional penchant for the odd or quirky, the grinning youngster with his trusty violin managed to capture the heart of a continent.

Having passed the first hurdle, could it be only another 29 years before it's "arise, Sir Graham?"

YOUR WEEK'S HOROSCOPE

BY RUSSELL GRANT

AQUARIUS (Jan 21-Feb 19)

USUALLY you keep a tight control over your emotions, but that may not be the case this week. A difficult relative could make you very angry. You resent their attempts to divert you from a treasured ambition. Keep in mind you can pursue this goal now you are no longer under their wing.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Aquarius** 09067-531762

TAURUS (Apr 21-May 21)

YOU'RE more ambitious than ever so you can't just sit idly by and watch other people steal your thunder. You may have to defy an authority figure if you aim to get noticed and although your boss won't like it much your behaviour will win you the attention you need from people who matter.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Taurus** 09067-531753

LEO (Jul 24-Aug 23)

RESIST the urge to use your social status for personal gain. If you're trying to win somebody's heart, it's better to keep a low profile. Your beloved isn't impressed by flashy gestures; he or she wants to know the real you. Arrange a casual date where the two of you can just talk.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Leo** 09067-531756

SCORPIO (Oct 24-Nov 22)

THERE'S lots of pushing and pulling involved in a close relationship. On one hand, you're delighted by your friend's practical methods. On the other, you don't like having your emotional approach dismissed. There has to be a compromise. Don't lay a guilt trip on a negligent friend.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Scorpio** 09067-531759

PISCES (Feb 20-Mar 20)

IT will be challenging getting your ideas across. At times it feels like people are deliberately twisting your words. Maybe it's because they're threatened by your plans. Instead of trying to win their approval, put your agenda into motion. People will respect you a lot more for it.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Pisces** 09067-531763

GEMINI (May 22-Jun 22)

WORKING behind the scenes has mixed results. On one hand, you can take your rivals by surprise. On the other, you could be branded as deceptive. Don't pretend to be more experienced than you are or you could be exposed. Show respect to someone with extensive experience.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Gemini** 09067-531754

VIRGO (Aug 24-Sep 23)

DEALING with somebody from a different background can be difficult. It's hard to read their body language. When in doubt, ask a direct question and you'll avoid confusion. If your new friend offers to teach you a skill, accept. You will thrive on the intellectual stimulation.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Virgo** 09067-531757

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23-Dec 21)

YOUR health could be delicate this week, so take it easy. Overindulging in food or drink will slow you down when you have to be efficient. Friends can help you stay on the straight and narrow. Tell them you need to follow a strict diet and stick to a brisk exercise regimen.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Sagittarius** 09067-531760

ARIES (Mar 21-Apr 19)

YOUR financial picture is mixed. Taking on an unorthodox job will bring in plenty of extra cash, but you'll have to restrain yourself from spending it all. Friends have a way of talking you into costly endeavours. Instead of caving in to peer pressure be content with what you have.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Aries** 09067-531752

CANCER (Jun 23-Jul 23)

TAKING charge of a group will bring both pleasure and pain. On the plus side, you'll be able to put your knowledge to good use. However, some members of the team will be jealous of your success. Don't bother trying to win them over. Keep doing the best job you can.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Cancer** 09067-531755

LIBRA (Sep 24-Oct 23)

HOLDING money and the power it gives you over somebody else will result in disaster. If they want to part ways let them leave with the stuff they brought to the union or your reputation as a honest person will be destroyed. If you are the victim of a bad break up, be good to yourself.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Libra** 09067-531758

CAPRICORN (Dec 22-Jan 20)

WHEN dealing with a youngster you need to remember that you're a role model. You can't ask a kid to abide by a moral code that you don't follow. You'll either have to change your ways or re-examine your values. Financial matters could get in the way of a relationship.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Capricorn** 09067-531761

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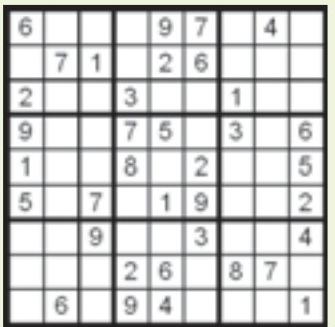
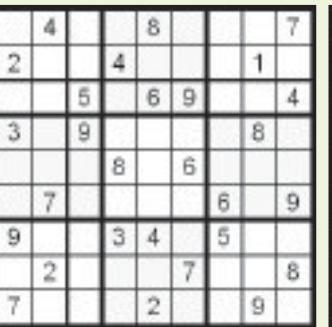
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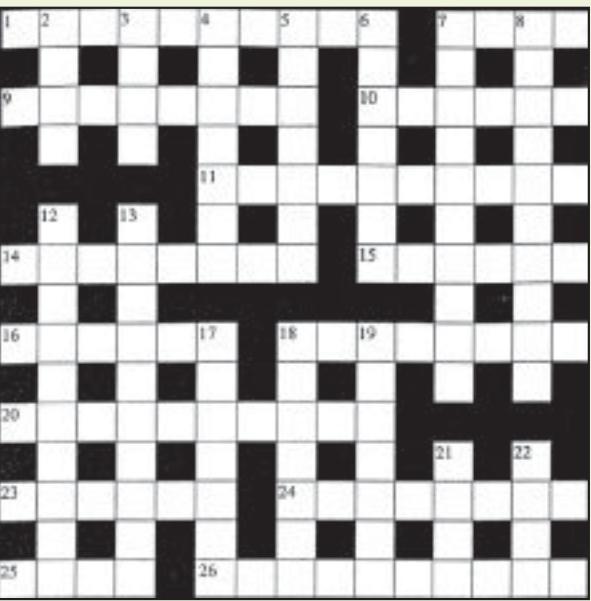
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Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9

EASY**MEDIUM****HARD****CRYPTIC CLUES****ACROSS**

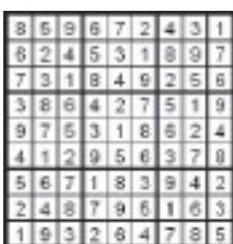
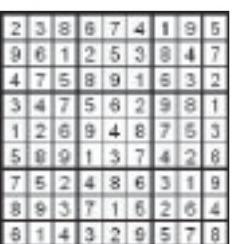
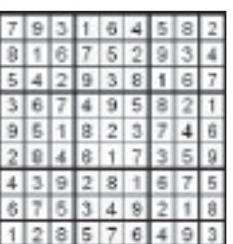
- 1 But this store does not have a monopoly (6,4)
 7 Drive south round sainted Cornish town (4)
 9 Pair is entering genuine retribution (8)
 10 Drive black aero-engine (6)
 11 Head off finally? (10)
 14 Relaxed but gloomy (8)
 15 Jack, clown stopping short, is very strong man (6)
 16 Gang leader strangely urged, having feeling of resentment (6)
 18 Slim lady cavorted in a depressing way! (8)
 20 Winning – in a game with horse chestnuts, say! (10)
 23 Faster sort of air attack (6)
 24 Number of starting-places on golf-links, or on the wagon (8)
 25 Be including semi-ripe cheese (4)
 26 Breathtaking (10)
DOWN
 2 In the horsebox encouraged cattle (4)
 3 Informer's name on chest (4)
 4 Live out classy part remaining (7)
 5 Hag coming from chalet, about 50 (7)
 6 One exercises in part wall (7)
 7 Unimportant abstract (10)
 8 Happening to take posh friend finally (10)
 12 After teatime get publicity for somewhere for the rest of the night (4-6)
 13 Poor Dean with quite a problem (10)
 17 Some of the clientele mentioned part (7)
 18 Ne'er-do-well on fishing-boat (7)
 19 Put forward plan that gets Gus upset (7)
 21 Fleece that might be pulled over one's eyes (4)
 22 Green cloth? (4)

SCRIBBLE HERE**QUICK CLUES****ACROSS**

- 1 Greet (5,5)
 7 Rescue (4)
 9 Smoked beef (8)
 10 Habituated (6)
 11 Military power (10)
 14 Mb in computing (8)
 15 Gambling (6)
 16 Greek goddess of wisdom (6)
 18 Plant with nodding flowers (8)
 20 Evade capture (4,3)
 23 Nap (6)
 24 Gypsy dancing (8)
 25 Ego (4)
 26 Setting aside (10)

DOWN

- 2 Leg-pull (4)
 3 Bird of prey (4)
 4 Rumour (7)
 5 Moonies (anag.) (7)
 6 Lively party (7)
 7 Substantial repast (6,4)
 8 Camera attachment (10)
 12 Plague (10)
 13 Mackintosh (10)
 17 Attain (7)
 18 Cone-bearing tree (7)
 19 Ancient Greek musical instrument (7)
 21 Yank (4)
 22 Religious image (4)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS**SUDOKU SOLUTIONS No87****EASY****MEDIUM****HARD**

Answers to all of this week's quizzes can be found on our website

CRYPTIC SOLUTION No87

ACROSS: 1 Bastille Day 9 Nimrod 10 Eulogise 12 Rejoice 14 Torquay 15 Ventilation 16 Ike 17 Net 19 Regrettable 22 Sweater 23 Lambast 24 Afflict 25 Brazil 26 Candlelight. **DOWN:** 2 Abidjan 3 Termini 4 Lad 5 Electric eel 6 Aileron 7 Agouti 8 Mary Celeste 11 Driving seat 13 Exaggerated 18 Te off 19 Retsina 20 Timpani 21 Bearish. 25 Bye.

QUICK SOLUTION No88

ACROSS: 1 Billing 4 Cassette 8 Little by little 10 Stowaway 11 Replay 12 Atom 13 All the time 15 Seated 17 Settled 18 Eat 22 Green 24 Amusement 25 Crème de la crème 26 Proceeded 27 Lotto. **DOWN:** 1 Bellista 2 Extreme 7 Tip 9 Hyacinth 14 Statement 15 Interdict 3 Ballot 4 Lame 5 Solitaires 6 Intermediates 5 Solitaires 7 Lip 8 Little by little 16 Leander 17 Singh 19 Art Economist 18 Settled 21 Periodic 23 Errol 24

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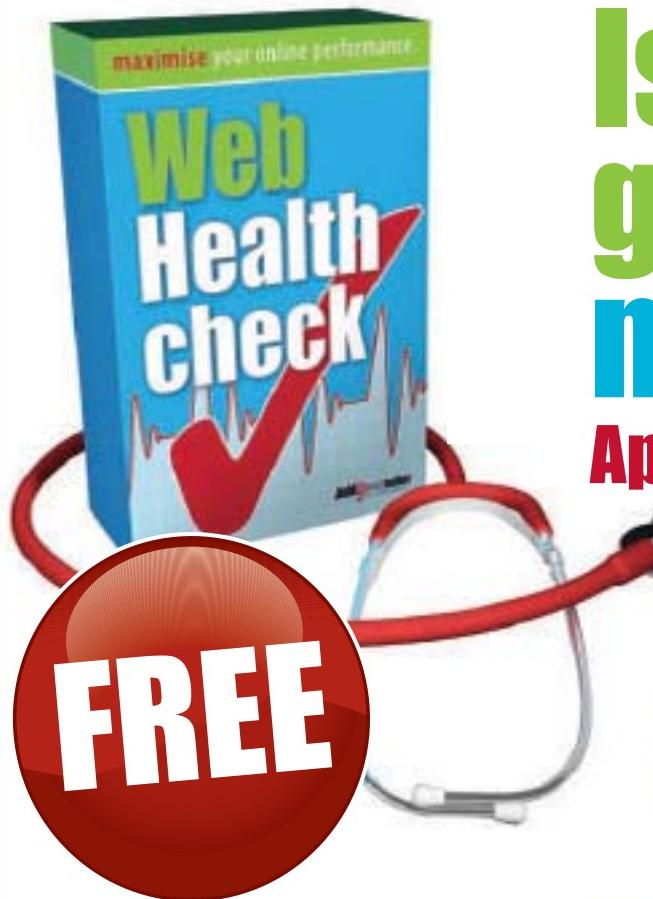
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PROPERTY NEWS

Call for Government to act on energy saving

THE Federation of Master Builders has called on the Government to act in response to the draft Heat and Energy Saving Strategy consultation.

The aim of the consultation is a long-term plan to cut carbon emissions from both homes and businesses, and ultimately to reduce emissions by 80 per cent by 2050.

It is all part of the Government's growing commitment to reducing carbon emissions – thought to be one of the main factors responsible for the problem of global warming.

But the federation has said the wheels need to be put in motion now, with a delivery plan backed by financial incentives if all of Britain's homes are to be upgraded by 2030.

Brian Berry, director of external affairs, said: "The Government's aim to upgrade all of Britain's homes by 2030 is not going to succeed unless the financial incentives are put in place to create a new market for greener, more energy-efficient homes."

"Householders have still to be convinced about the merits of spending thousands of pounds on energy-efficient improvements with little prospect of seeing a return on their money."

"If the Government is serious about its commitment to upgrade our homes, it needs to introduce some financial incentives, such as cutting VAT to five per cent for home improvements; council tax rebates and/or the introduction of green mortgages."

Agency targets FTBs as market boosters

THE UK's largest online network of estate agents has offered its tips for first-time buyers who are considering taking their crucial first steps on to the property ladder.

Email4property.co.uk believes activity from this end of the market will accelerate over the summer months as improved affordability begins to infiltrate the housing market.

Steve Lees, head of marketing at email4property.co.uk, said: "With property prices at their most affordable for a number of years, now is proving an excellent time for first-time buyers to secure their first home."

"While lenders are taking a much more cautious approach at the moment, there are still some good deals out there for any buyers who are in a position to provide a reasonable deposit."



OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK: The slump in property values over the coming months may not be as bad as predicted and the price of your home could increase by the end of the year

Lloyds predicts upturn in market by year's end

PROPERTY owners have negotiated the worst of the recession as house prices are set to rise again by the end of the year, according to the country's biggest lender.

Optimistic predictions that the market is to bottom out have come from experts at Lloyds, who have said that prices will now fall by just another six per cent before turning the corner.

As a result, by the end of the year, the market will begin to pick up again, with values starting to increase once more.

But other analysts have emphasised the worst is not quite over – and the coming months will not see any quick respite from the slump.

Optimistic

The forecast comes as financial commentators grow more optimistic about the outlook for the UK economy and stock market, with the FTSE 100 now showing a gain for the year.

Lloyds, which has a 30 per cent share of the mortgage market, previously thought house prices would fall 15 per cent this year – or a

■ BY NICK AMES

drop of about 34 per cent from the August 2007 peak average price of £199,612.

However, the company's analysts now believe the decline is likely to be closer to ten per cent, with prices probably bottoming within months.

As a result, as prices are already down 3.8 per cent this year, according to the Halifax house price index, this means a further fall of just six per cent before the upturn.

Stephen Noakes, of Lloyds, said: "I think we will only see about ten per cent to 12 per cent falls this year."

"For the first time, people are thinking that house prices will increase over the next 12 months."

Other property experts are also giving more encouraging assessments of future market trends.

Ray Boulger, of brokers John Charcol, said he was of the opinion that house prices had only eight per cent left to fall before bottoming in the autumn and then increasing by three per cent by the end of the year.

Lloyds last week slashed the cost of deals for people who want to get on to the property ladder as price falls have slowed.

However, experts warn that there will continue to be falls in the coming months.

Martin Ellis, housing economist at the Halifax, said: "The average UK house price declined by 1.7 per cent in April, slightly less than the 1.9 per cent monthly fall in the previous month."

Affordable

"The house price-to-earnings ratio – a key measure of housing affordability – is at its lowest level since the autumn of 2002 at 4.26.

"Mortgage rate cuts have reduced monthly payments for the average existing borrower by £111 since October 2008, also boosting affordability. Mortgage approvals remain at historically very low levels."

"Rising unemployment, low consumer confidence and the reduced availability of credit are all expected to exert downward pressure on the housing market over the next few months."

"As a result, further house price declines are likely."

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3 bed 1960's semi. Modernisation required. Central heating. Double glazing. Garage.

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3 bedroom house, UPVC double glazed windows, carport to side.

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Maidstone £169,995

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Vinters Park £155,000

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Maidstone OIEO £139,995

2 bed, lounge/diner, central heating, double glazing, parking.

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Maidstone £129,950

2 bed 1st floor apartment, lounge, kitchen, bathroom, en-suite shower room, double glazing.

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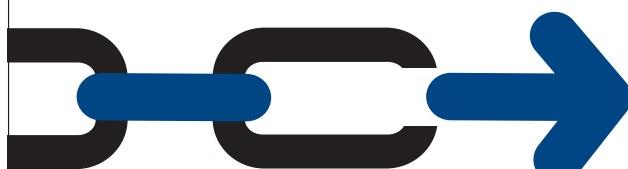
Leeds £125,000

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**MAIDSTONE £109,950**

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**LOOSE OIEO £185,000**

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**MAIDSTONE OIEO £185,000**

An improved 1930's style semi, adjacent to Mote Park. Benefits from a re-fitted kitchen & bathroom, driveway, garage, rear garden, gas ventral heating and double aspect lounge/dining room.

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**MAIDSTONE £169,950**

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**MAIDSTONE £105,000**

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**WEST MALLING £469,950**

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**MAIDSTONE £379,950**

A detached home with 4 double bedrooms, be-spoke fitted kitchen is open plan into dining room, living room and conservatory. Offers a utility room, shower room and bathroom.

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**MAIDSTONE £79,950**

A purpose built two bedroom ground floor flat with gas central heating and double glazing. The property does require some updating and is available with no forward chain.

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**MAIDSTONE OIEO £175,000**

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**MAIDSTONE £199,950**

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**WEST MALLING £299,995**

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**AYLESFORD £184,995**

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**MAIDSTONE £159,995**

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**MAIDSTONE OIEO £159,995**

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**PUBLIC NOTICE**

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 184 South Park Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 7AJ

We are acting for the mortgagees and have received an offer of £130,500 on the above property. Any interested parties must submit any higher offers in writing to the selling agent before an exchange of contracts takes place.

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**MAIDSTONE OIEO £115,000**

A two bedroom home on the periphery of the town centre. The cul-de-sac is a retirement complex for the over 60's to retain independent living but have the security of warden assistance.

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**MAIDSTONE £115,000**

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 34 Waterlow Road, Maidstone, Kent ME14 2TR

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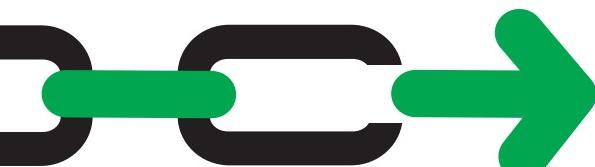
Maidstone Office 01622 759891

**MAIDSTONE £115,000**

A two bedroom lower ground floor apartment situated in the town centre. There are two good size bedrooms, lounge, kitchen and bathroom. This property is offered with no forward chain

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Day Three - The Rose Bowl, Southampton - Wednesday, 10th June - 11am.

FOLKESTONE Freehold Block for Investment Guide: £200-250,000	SEVINGTON, ASHFORD Pair of Derelict Cottages with Potential Guide: £100-110,000	CANTERBURY Three Bed Bungalow, Gge & Parking Guide: £190-200,000	MARGATE Three Bed House for Investment Guide: £100-110,000	STURRY Three Acre Site - Good road frontage Guide: £200-220,000
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£119,950

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£159,950

Three Bedroom semi detached house in need of refurbishment, good commuter links by both road and rail.



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Three bed home has off road parking, lounge, kitchen, cellar currently used as dining room and bathroom.



£180,000

Two bedroom top floor apartment. Lake views, parking and en suite bathroom. Surprisingly spacious.



Offers in excess of £180,000

Three bedroom end of terrace situated within half mile of Mote Park and town centre, available immediately.



Offers Over £190,000

Corner plot, available with no onward chain, lounge and dining room, two bedrooms, bathroom, wc and kitchen.



£249,995

Extended 3 bed semi detached home, extended reception space plus extended kitchen. This house must be viewed.



Fixed Price £250,000

Detached bungalow with no onward chain, a viewing is highly recommended as stamp duty is negotiable.

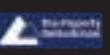


£499,995

Detached family home, cul de sac position, executive home is offered for sale. Must be viewed.

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- Popular Location
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- 3 Bed Modern End of Terrace
- Ensuite to master bedroom
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- NO ONWARD CHAIN

Maidstone £174,995



- Period terrace home
- Three/Four Bedrooms
- Flexible Accommodation
- Gas central heating

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- Modern 3 bed detached house
- 2 reception rooms
- Master bedroom with ensuite
- Garage and parking

Maidstone £237,500



- Fantastic 4 Bed Semi Detached
- Corner Plot Location
- Extended Kitchen
- 16" Lounge, Sep. Dining Room

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**Bearsted £850 PCM**

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**Maidstone £500 PCM**

A newly renovated one bed property. It has a Lounge/Diner and Kitchen. Double Bedroom with fitter carpet and Ensuite Shower. Available Now.

**Coxheath £550 PCM**

A well presented one double bed house. Offers spacious living/dining area, lots of storage, white goods in kitchen, bathroom, good sized garden.

**Bearsted £850 PCM**

A fantastic opportunity to rent this delightful bungalow. It features a large loung/diner, fitted kitchen, two double beds & single bed, family bathroom, a large garden, garage & off road parking.

**Maidstone £865 PCM**

A well presented 3 bed semi detached Victorian house. It benefits from a one bed self contained annex with appliances, lounge, 2 double beds, single bed, bathroom with shower, gas central heating.



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**Maidstone £600 PCM**

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**Maidstone £1,200 PCM**

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MOTORS NEWS



Mazda launches frugal new Ford Focus chaser

MAZDA has launched an all-new rival in the hard-fought family hatchback sector.

The latest Mazda3 (from £13,500) echoes the sharp styling of the bigger '6' model and gains new 2.2-litre performance diesel engines of 150PS (148bhp) and 185PS (182bhp) output.

Fuel economy is better by up to 16 percent and CO₂ emissions reduced by 19 per cent. Company car user choosers will like reduced Benefit in Kind liabilities.

The range is again offered in five-door and four-door formats.



Chrysler is marking 25 years in special style

CHRYSLER is celebrating the Grand Voyager's 25th anniversary with a special edition.

Already big on value, the £32,600 GV 'special' comes with extras including leather trimmed seats, dual screen rear DVD entertainment system and 'unconnect' GPS sat nav, Xenon headlamps and 'Bentley' style chrome mesh grille.

But the famous Stow 'n' Go system is standard, allowing the second and third row of seats to fold flat into the floor, offering extra luggage space.



Take the air for free on the sharp-suited Cruze

CHEVROLET is tipped to further boost market share with the forthcoming sharp-suited Cruze saloon, due to replace the ageing Lacetti in July.

The General Motors value brand is also drumming up advance interest by righting a glaring omission from an otherwise generous spec on the £11,545 Cruze 1.6S entry model – air con. Normally a £450 extra, this will be free on any Cruze ordered before August 31 and joins electronic stability control and follow-me-home lighting as major bonuses on this newcomer.



EYE-CATCHER: The MiTo sums up everything that's great about Alfa Romeo, taking in lines echoing that of the stunning Alfa 8C Competizione supercar and superb value for money

Alfa will challenge Mini with its own 'M-word'

ROAD TEST ALFA MITO

■ BY STEVE LOADER

STAR QUALITY

Driving appeal

★★★★★

Image

★★★★★

Space

★★★★★

Value

★★★★★

Running costs

★★★★★

Reliability

★★★★★

Green rating

★★★★★

Such all-round appeal is enhanced by a sector-leading standard-fit package of selectable driver aids/modes under the somewhat cheesy abbreviation DNA – in this case, short for Dynamic, Normal and All-Weather.

'Dynamic' is what Alfa has always strived to stand for: quick, taut and responsive with the engine yelling to let you know it's with you all the way; 'Normal' does what it says on the tin, looking after you in busy traffic when more comfort is required; while 'All-Weather' gets you home in the sort of snowy conditions Kent experienced earlier in the year, by toning down throttle response and keeping you sensible... and on the road.

The MiTo is not the roomiest supermini though, but comes with a maximum five-star NCAP safety rating and generous specifications.

The range opens with an unblown 1.4-litre petrol at £11,795 and the perky diesels begin at £12,245. There is an evocative series of trim levels too; tell your mates you bought the Turismo and they probably won't have clue that you bought the cooking version, Lusso doesn't sound half bad even if it is the halfway house, while Veloce sounds just right for a famous sporting brand. Looks best in red or black though.



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20% DEPOSIT on selected models*



CITROËN GRAND C4 PICASSO FROM £13,150*.

Model shown: CITROËN GRAND C4 PICASSO 2.0HDi 16V 138HP EGS EXCLUSIVE £19,995*

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CRÉATIVE TECHNOLOGIE

*ON THE ROAD RECOMMENDED PRICES AND OFFERS APPLY TO QUALIFYING NEW CITROËN VEHICLES ORDERED 01/30/04/09 AND REGISTERED BY 30/06/09 AND INCLUDE VAT, DELIVERY TO DEALER AND NUMBER PLATES. GOVERNMENT FIRST REGISTRATION FEE, AND 12 MONTHS' GRADUATED VEHICLE EXCISE DUTY BLACK/METALLIC PAINT OPTIONAL AT EXTRA COST. PRICES AND OFFERS SHOWN INCLUDE THE DEDUCTION OF THE APPROPRIATE MANUFACTURER'S MODEL CASHBACKS AND/OR DEALER CONTRIBUTION FROM THE MANUFACTURER'S ON THE ROAD RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICES. FROM PRICES SHOWN: NEW CITROËN C4 1.6 16V 90HP LX £12,360, CITROËN C4 PICASSO 1.6 16V VTi 120HP LX £12,282 AND CITROËN GRAND C4 PICASSO 1.6 16V VTi 120HP LX £13,150. GUARANTEED £2000 SCRAPPAGE CASHBACK FOR YOUR OLD CAR WILL APPLY TO CUSTOMERS TRADING IN A QUALIFYING VEHICLE FIRST REGISTERED BEFORE 1ST JANUARY 2000 AGAINST THE PURCHASE OF A QUALIFYING NEW CITROËN C4, CITROËN C4 PICASSO AND CITROËN GRAND C4 PICASSO. TO QUALIFY FOR THE CASHBACK, VEHICLE MUST BE PRESENTED WITH A CERTIFICATE OF DESTRUCTION (C.O.D) PROVIDED BY AN AUTHORISED TREATMENT FACILITY (ATF). A V5, VALID MOT, BE PROPERLY INSURED, LEGAL TO BE DRIVEN ON THE HIGHWAY, AND HAVE BEEN REGISTERED IN THE CUSTOMERS NAME FOR A MINIMUM OF 1 YEAR. THIS GUARANTEED CASHBACK IS THE TOTAL VALUE THAT A CUSTOMER WILL RECEIVE FROM THE MANUFACTURER WHEN TRADING IN THEIR QUALIFYING PART EXCHANGE VEHICLE FOR A QUALIFYING NEW CITROËN, SEE DEALER FOR FULL TERMS AND CONDITIONS. *0% APR TYPICAL FINANCE AVAILABLE OVER 3 YEARS ON NEW CITROËN C4 (EXCLUDING LX), CITROËN C4 PICASSO (EXCLUDING VTR+) AND CITROËN GRAND C4 PICASSO (EXCLUDING VTR+ AND 1.6 LX) MODELS AND AVAILABLE OVER 4 YEARS ON CITROËN C4 PICASSO VTR+ CITROËN GRAND C4 PICASSO VTR+ MODELS. FINANCE SUBJECT TO STATUS. WRITTEN QUOTATIONS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST FROM CITROËN FINANCIAL SERVICES, QUADRANT HOUSE, PRINCESS WAY, REDHILL, SURREY, RH1 1QA, UK. OVER 185 ONLY. A GUARANTEE MAY BE REQUIRED. THIS UNIQUE SCHEME ALLOWS ALL QUALIFYING NEW RETAIL CUSTOMERS, IN THE EVENT OF INVOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY, TO RETURN THE FINANCED VEHICLE WITH NO FURTHER PAYMENTS REQUIRED, APART FROM OUTSTANDING ARREARS, EXCESS MILEAGE OR VEHICLE DAMAGE COSTS. SOLE TRADERS AND PARTNERSHIPS EXCLUDED. *EXTRA URBAN CYCLE. OFFERS, PRICES AND SPECIFICATION CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS FROM PARTICIPATING DEALERS FOR PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS AND QUALIFYING BUSINESS USERS. TERMS & CONDITIONS APPLY. PLEASE ASK US FOR DETAILS. COMPANIES WITH A CENTRALLY NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT WITH CITROËN UK LTD, NATIONAL FLEETS, MOTABILITY AND CONTRACT HIRE ARE EXCLUDED FROM THESE OFFERS. ALL MODELS SUBJECT TO STOCK AVAILABILITY. FINANCE OFFERS APPLY TO UK ONLY. ^bCITROËN GRAND C4 PICASSO WHAT CAR? BEST MPV IN BRITAIN 2009.

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USED CAR ROUND-UP: OUR PICK FROM A KEY SECTOR

FIAT DOBLO



NOT the greatest looking MPV, but the Doblo probably offers more space to the pound than any other. Odd looks disguise surprisingly good handling and comfort, with easy access via two rear sliding doors. Fiat diesel technology makes it attractive too, although it is best to go for the top of the range 103bhp turbodiesel to get anything like decent acceleration with a load – it hits 60mph in 12.6 seconds compared with the entry level 1.2 petrol version's 19 seconds.

STAR QUALITY

Driving appeal	★★★★★
Looks and image	★★★★★
Space	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Running costs	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Quality	★★★★★

AFFORDABLE MPVs

JUST a few years ago, a new breed of van-based budget people carriers suffered from a 'Postman Pat' image. But the recession has brought realism in place of image-conscious consumerism. Many hard-pressed families realise models like those featured here can be far cheaper to run than a specialist people carrier. Small businesses love them too, because these workhorses can switch from a midweek van role to weekend family holdall, with sliding rear doors for easy access. Top-notch diesel options make them reliable and good on fuel too.

RENAULT KANGOO



RENAULT invented the MPV thing with the Espace and then the Scenic, so the French marque was bound to compete in the budget sector. The Kangoo is both spacious and comfortable, with a pliant ride. It is available – at a premium price – with a lively 80bhp diesel, although petrol options are competent too. Rear sliding doors add to the car's huge high roof space efficiency and flexibility and there are 4x4 Trekka (pictured) versions if you need the extra traction.

STAR QUALITY

Driving appeal	★★★★★
Looks and image	★★★★★
Space	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Running costs	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Quality	★★★★★

PEUGEOT PARTNER COMBI/CITROËN BERLINGO MULTISPACE



WE cheated on numbers this week, but these two models are virtually identical clones even if the Citroën (pictured) is more common due to keener prices and higher sales when new. Probably the most refined if not the most spacious models in this class, most versions are pleasant to drive and ride in though the legendary power and refinement of their PSA diesels will most tempt growing families, dog lovers or people needing to load up for a sporty lifestyle.

STAR QUALITY

Driving appeal	★★★★★
Looks and image	★★★★★
Space	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Running costs	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Quality	★★★★★

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Hopeful, happy, shy girl, 22, loves all the normal stuff about life, searching for a mature guy, 24-39, for loving friendship and happiness. Box 880373

SINGLE DADS WELCOME

Lovely single mum, 23, cuddly and curvy, 5ft6, blonde and blue-eyed, like a drink, animals, reading, cinema, looking for honest, trustworthy and caring male. Box 451249

MATCH OF THE DAY!

Fun-to-be-with, blonde female, 25, 5ft2, a woman who loves football! Enjoys going out and staying in, looking for a like-minded man, to be her soulmate. Box 446494

NOT YOUR BROWN-EYED GIRL, BUT...

Blue eyed blonde, 27, 5ft1, loves films, walking, darts, pool, singing, me time! Looking for honest guy with GSOH, to get to know. Box 880105

ME AND YOU

Medium build girl, 28, brown hair, green eyes, seeking honest guy who looks after number one, for lasting relationship. Box 451334

GETTING TO KNOW YOU...

Sociable girl, 28, loves pubs, social drinks, meeting new people & more, seeks similar male, 58-62, for a lasting relationship. Box 446756

GIVE AND TAKE IN LOVE

Loving loyal female, 30, blue eyes, brown hair, seeking LTR with male 30-35, fits, no baggage, in the Maidstone area. Box 448471

SEEKING MR DARCY

Warm, kind and sincere woman, 31, lots of love and loyalty for the right person, seeking an honest genuine man with a good heart. Box 451004

HAPPY SHOPPER!

Easygoing female, 32, enjoys shopping, football, eating out, cosy night in, WLTM loving, caring white male, 35-47, for long-term, loving relationship. No time-wasters. Box 444214

STACEY LOOKING FOR HER GAVIN

Slim, blue-eyed beauty, 31, Tunbridge Wells, loving, caring, very genuine. Wanting someone to cuddle up with at night and have lots of laughs with. Box 881494

CUFFY FEMALE

32, 5ft3, brown hair, curly figure, enjoys having fun and a laugh and WLTM nice, kind gent. Box 439402

HORSES FOR COURSES...

Caring, loving, affectionate female, 30, 5ft2, blonde, likes walking, horse riding, animals, sees affectionate male, 30-40, for lasting, loving relationship. Box 384013

FIT FOR FUN

Petite, dark-haired girl, 33, 5ft, fit, loves badminton, cinema and more, searching for an active man, with heart and soul. Box 881047

_SOUND GOOD?

Hello I'm 35, kind, caring and non-smoking, enjoy cooking, cinema, music, dining in and out, looking for that special someone to enjoy a relationship with. Box 447955

SEIZE THE DAY

Loving female, 36, 5ft4, brown hair, green eyes, likes socialising, staying in, seeks genuine male for friendship and more. Box 428666

BLONDE AMBITION

Bubbly, cuddly, blonde single mum, 39, 5ft5, likes cars, reading, pubs, cosy nights in, having a laugh, looking for right male for LTR. Box 905614

OUTE AS CAN BE

Cute, single female, 4, 38 years old, Kent-based, into most things, looking for friendship or possibly romance. Box 897983

ENTHUSIASM ENCOURAGED!

Lovely pretty big-busted lady, 39, medium build, 5ft5, lots of energy! likes the gym, reading, new experiences! seeking a nice man for potential exciting relationship! Box 446724

LOOKING FOR A LOVING CHAP

Ashford-based woman looking for an honest, friendly, caring and loving man. I have two kids and enjoy the usual things in life. Box 446985

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Live assistance, 2pm-5.30pm, Mon to Fri | Email: luise@gwave.co.uk

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**MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE**

Good looking woman, 37, 5ft2, brown hair/eyes, 2 kids. Looking for new friends and hopefully someone special. Box 446039

ON THE LOOKOUT FOR LOVE

37 year old female, 2 kids, slim, brown hair and eyes, 5ft2, looking for a caring, loving, honest and trusting male to be my someone special. Box 451652

GALLOP AHEAD!

Maidstone-based woman, 36, 5ft5, slim, blue eyes, I'm caring, honest and have 4 children. I enjoy drives and horse riding and WLTM honest, reliable man. Box 451311

PERHAPS PERHAPS

Easy-going blonde, 30, blue eyes, brown hair, outgoing, loves to go out, caring, loving, honest and trusting male for a relationship. Box 451028

BE BETWEEN US

Asian lady, 41, single, not out, going out, fun loving, professional, looking for a white male, genuine, professional and solvent. Box 451900

A FAIRY TALE ENDING

Easy-going blonde, 30, 5ft, going out and facile, going out, eating out, cinema and pubs, looking for a boy/girl friend and a good friend. Box 451079

FANCY A DRINK?

I'm Judith, 40, small, blonde hair, blue eyes, love the sea and water-sports, cinema, animals; WLTM fun-loving guy for a friend ship/relationship. Box 451049

THIS IS STATE OF INDEPENDENCE

Hard-working female, 41, 5ft4, bubbly, independent woman, love to laugh, socialising with friends, looking for independent man who values TLC. Box 450650

WHERE LOVE TAKES US

Attractive woman with a great personality to go with, looking to meet a fit, tall, well-built black male, 35-55, for fun times and hopefully romance. Box 451456

A LITTLE ROMANCE

Pleasant female, 43, medium/large build, blue/green eyes, grown up children, beach walks, relaxing, reading, wine, seeks sincere male with a father for a friend ship/relationship. Box 450890

A HEART FULL OF LOVE

Nice looking, 41 year old mixed race female likes cinema, walks, eating out, bowling, WLTM a genuine white male with gsoh for a fun filled friend ship/relationship. Box 451000

COME ON DOWN!

Honest, bubbly female, 45, long hair, slim, enjoys walking, cinema, socialising; seeks honest, friendly chap for friendship leading to more. Box 488293

CHARM ME

Tall, blonde Russian girl, 42, from St Leonards, searching for single and sincere man, for friendship and more. Box 451019

ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE

Hello I'm Nikki, 41 year young, 5ft1, enjoys dining out, cinema and dancing, seeking a male for friendship, possible romance and fun times. Box 444795

PROFESSIONAL

Funny bubbly sexy black female, 42, outgoing, positive, fun-loving, seeks charming male to have fun and enjoy life with. Box 451744

ACTIVE TYPE

Lively, energetic and fun loving mum, 42, I'm 5ft1, petite, pretty, blonde/brown hair/hazel eyes. WLTM mixed race/black gent, to share good times with. Box 451819

COSY TIMES TOGETHER

Fun-loving female, 42, looking for someone who can make me laugh and enjoys country walks, films, travelling and a nice evening cuddled up. Box 881545

A WARM HEART AND GSOH

Lovely bubbly mum, 43, 5ft6, green eyes, dark hair, medium build, loves salsa dancing, new things, bowling, quiet nights in...looking for a companion ship and more! Box 449186

SOUND GOOD?

I'm Lynne 46, 5ft4, dark hair, eye, reading/writing, going out, astrology, cars; seeking honest, caring, outgoing guy to enjoy music, fun, friend ship and more! Box 451896

ARE YOU THE ONE FOR ME?

Caring, cute female, 46, petite, likes socialising, dancing, travelling, good food, seeking intelligent, loyal man 42-52 for love and TLC. Box 444366

COULD IT BE YOU?

I'm 44, 5ft6, 5ft8, a redhead, love nights out, socialising, looking for friendship initially and hopefully more later on. Box 889800

JOURNEY TOGETHER

Coy, shy, cheeky, loving black lady, 45, enjoys the sunshine, holidays, drinks, films and music, looking for a man to complete me as will him. Box 451217

LOVING IT LARGE

Spiritual 44yr old female, 5ft6, brown hair, blue eyes, 2 kids, brown hair, green eyes, looking for a caring male for friendship, maybe a LTR. Box 444803

ARE YOU THE ONE FOR ME?

Caring, cute female, 46, petite, likes socialising, dancing, travelling, good food, seeking intelligent, loyal man 42-52 for love and TLC. Box 444366

DO YOU FEEL THE SAME?

Hi ya, I'm lan, 40, 5ft10, medium build, likes a quiet life style, looking for someone who can love/accept me for who I am. Box 450283

FUN AND MAYBE MORE

Hi I'm 37, new to town and would love to meet some genuine companions to socialise with and go out and have some fun. Box 880546

WOMEN SEEKING MEN

Friendly woman, 39, 5ft6, blonde hair, blue eyes, interested in historical places, music, eating out, sees kind, caring, genuine male 36-49, non-smoker, for LTR. Box 446993

ENTHUSIASM ENCOURAGED!

Lovely pretty big-busted lady, 39, medium build, 5ft5, lots of energy! likes the gym, reading, new experiences! seeking a nice man for potential exciting relationship! Box 446724

LOOKING FOR A LOVING CHAP

Ashford-based woman looking for an honest, friendly, caring and loving man. I have two kids and enjoy the usual things in life. Box 446985

LET'S CLICK

WLTM a nice guy with a similar nature; I'm an outgoing woman, 42, with brown hair and green eyes. Tell me about you! Box 446847

SWING THIS WAY

Lovely 40yr old mum, average build, brown hair, blue eyes, 5ft2, bubbly and GSOH...would like friend ship and maybe more with the right man. Box 880434

TIME TO LIVE AGAIN

Sweet girl, 43, 5ft2, brown hair/eyes, nurse, searching for active man, for pub, clubs and good times. Box 451028

ALONG THE SHORE

Recently divorced woman, 43, 5ft3, slim, hard-working, fun-loving, likes theatre, music and eating out, WLTM a genuine male, for a relationship. Box 442551

LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL

Good-looking brunette from Kent, 43, 5ft10, old mum, average build, brown hair, blue eyes, 5ft2, bubbly and GSOH...would like friend ship and maybe more with the right man. Box 451028

HERE AND NOW

Outgoing lady, 50, enjoys walks along the beach, nights out and in with a quiet bottle of wine, seeks man to love forever. Box 449524

CARING & PROFESSIONAL

Young mom, 41, 5ft4, bubbly, likes eating out, the beach, travel seeks a friendly chap for everlasting happiness. Box 447100

OPENNESS AND HONESTY

I'm 52, curly, lively, intelligent with sharp SOH, enjoy conversation, live music, eating out and cinema...looking for someone comfortable in his own skin. Box 879785

COMPANIONSHIP, LAUGHTER, MORE

Younging, bubbly, outgoing, friendly, honest female, 53, 5ft7, larger build, fair hair, likes socialising, country walks, theatre, cinema, music, swimming, WLTM similar loving male. Box 446342

CARING & PROFESSIONAL

Female 49, 5ft4, bubbly, likes eating out, swimming, films and family time. Box 451418

LUCKY BUNNY

Easy-going blonde, 41, 5ft6, brown hair, blue eyes, 5ft2, bubbly and GSOH...would like friend ship and maybe more with the right man. Box 451028

ATTRACTIVE FELLA

Tall, dark and handsome chap, 33 years old. I'm looking for a lively, attractive woman, 21-47, to get to know. Give me a call! Box 451893

LONG-TERM THING

Hi I'm Judi, 50, tall, brown hair, blue eyes, looking for someone who wants to start a great life of love and romance...don't be shy. Box 881824

MAKE ME SMILE

Average-looking guy, 5ft8, tall, medium build, friendly, likes to laugh. Looks unimportant, personally more important, I enjoy meals out/in. Box 879907

OPEN AND HONEST

45 year old man, 5ft, medium build, looking to begin again, I'm romantic, solvent, down-to-earth, enjoy most things in life, seeking a LTR. Chatham Box 443028

SHARE THE GOOD LIFE

Smart petite lady, 56, 5ft1, tall, blonde hair, green eyes, looking for a loving guy with similar interests. Box 451592

GET ME OUTTA HERE!

Loyal, trustworthy, honest family man, 37, independent, stocky, 5ft6, non-smoker, GSOH, thoughtful and aware of other people's feelings, with morals/standards. Aquarian. Seeking similar loving lady. Box 449583

IS IT ME YOU'RE LOOKING FOR?

Kind, genuine, down-to-earth male, 47, seeking companion ship and LTR, 5ft10, cropped hair, blue eyes, stocky with cuddly wife! Box 449583

ROLL WITH ME

Easygoing male, 45, 5ft8, likes cinema, dancing, rock and roll, meals out, seeks female, for warmth and affection. Folkestone Box 415590

FULL MARKS

Hi I'm Andrew, 38, 6ft3, dark hair, blue eyes, good build, likes keeping fit, likes sports and reading, WLTM a woman for friend ship and romance. Box 423437

TRUSTWORTHY

Margate man, 37, 6ft3, dark hair, nice big build. I work in residential care which I love. I'm down-to-earth, kind, tactile, with a GSOH. Box 451826

MAKE ME SMILE

Homely guy, down-to-earth, 48, 5ft7, brown hair and eyes, good build, likes many interests, seeks lady to cuddle with. Box 450576

A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Solvent, professional 41 yr old male, enjoys eating out, films, keeping fit, WLTM younger male for friend ship, hopefully love. Box 444725

ADVENTURE & FUN GUARANTEED

Fit, young male, 41, 6ft, blond, green eyes, good build, likes keeping fit, nights out, seeking man, 25-40, 6ft+, well-built. Box 447518

MEANT TO BE?

Truthworthy, honest guy, 55, romantic, medium build, loves cinema, meals, drinks and other things, looking for relationship and TLR in Margate... Cranbrook Box 737529

NIGHT OUT? NIGHT IN?

Easygoing male, 40, 5ft6, most things in life, seeks slim white female 21-45 for company, friendship and romance. Box 451889

FRIENDS FIRST

Caring, understanding chap, 40, 5ft7, blue eyes, good build, likes keeping fit, likes travel, music, film, restaurants, theatre, days out, badminton. Box 451361

DO YOU FEEL THE SAME?

Hi ya, I'm lan, 40, 5ft10, medium build, likes a quiet life style, looking for someone who can love/accept me for who I am. Box 450283

FRIENDSHIP HOPEFULLY MORE

Friendly woman, 46, easygoing, caring, 45, long brown hair, blue eyes: I love music, eating out, reading/writing, drives, weekends away, WLTM boyish female. Box 448491



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Abbey Court School "WE GROW PEOPLE"

Abbey Court School, a 'special' school and a 'special' place to work.

We are currently looking for...

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

to join and enhance our large and expanding, high calibre team.
Medway Scale, Grade D2

£14,891 - £18,937 (pay award pending) + SEN Allowance (£1,162)

Are you committed, motivated and enthusiastic? Does 'Every Child Matters' to you? Can you make a difference? If so, share your talents and expertise with us.

Abbey Court is located on 2 sites; Rainham (Primary) and Strood (Secondary and Further Education), and caters for pupils aged 4-19 with severe learning difficulties. Working hours are 32.5 p/w, term time only. Previous experience and/or NNEB (or equivalent) qualifications preferred. Comprehensive training and induction will be provided.

This School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Any offer of appointment for post is subject to a satisfactory Criminal Record Bureau Disclosure.

For an application pack, please write to/telephone (stating the role for which you are applying):
Mrs Linda Taylor, Abbey Court School, Rede Court Road, Strood, Kent ME2 3SP
(01634 338224)

Please note CV's will not be accepted. Closing date: 3.6.2009

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email: enquiries@gsgg.org.uk



TEACHER OF MATHEMATICS

Maternity Cover – September 2009

We are looking for a well-qualified and enthusiastic Teacher of Mathematics to join a highly successful Faculty. The person appointed would be required to teach up to A' Level. Maths is a very popular option with students and a high proportion go on to study a Mathematical course in Higher Education.

The person appointed will receive high quality mentoring and support. The Faculty enjoys excellent facilities and equipment.

We have been a Specialist Science College since September 2004; this has led to a broad range of innovative practice across the school and we are looking to develop cross-curricular projects involving Mathematics.

The School has a high profile for achievement locally and nationally and prides itself on a strong record of internal professional development including a full induction in the Summer term.

The School is also an Investor in People and an Investor in Careers.

Application forms and further details are available from the Headteacher's Personal Assistant, Mrs M Tong Ralphs. Completed forms should be returned by post, fax or email for the attention of **Mrs E Wilson, Headteacher** no later than

Thursday 21st May 2009

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

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Have you ever considered working in Kent? Known as the garden of England for good reason, with its beautiful, historic and varied landscapes, idyllic villages and diverse towns, Kent has a lot to offer. On the doorstep of mainland Europe you are only 45 minutes away from enjoying a coffee and croissant in France, or of course popping into London to catch a show!

With over 620km of public rights of way, Kent County Council manages the largest network in the country. It also has an excellent national reputation in service delivery and forward thinking, dynamic new initiatives.

Public Rights of Way Officer (Enforcement)

£20,262 - £30,229 (Salary dependent on experience and progression through the Career Grade is based on the fulfillment of required competencies) Initially on a two year fixed term contract Maidstone

Joining our Public Rights of Way Team, you will have considerable proven experience of Public Rights of Way or enforcement along with the ability to apply that experience in a pragmatic way to a range of challenging situations. You will be able to investigate reported breaches, prepare case papers and present evidence in Court to the highest standard; and be able to develop similar skills in those around you.

Communicating the requirements of the law effectively to a diverse range of groups with the intention of reducing the number of offences being reported is also required.

With your excellent organisation and communication skills, you will juggle numerous competing priorities and adapt readily to the use of new technology.

You will be a team player, with either considerable proven experience of working within PROW or enforcement or be educated to HND or degree level in a related subject. Ref: ER/ag/0045

Public Rights of Way Officer (Asset Management Delivery):

Starting salary £20,262
1 year fixed term appointment with possible extension subject to funding
West Malling

The Countryside Access Service is looking for a new officer to join them to deliver capital maintenance programmes across the county. A substantial proportion of the network sits within the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. You will be joining a busy West Kent PROW Team, and will prepare and supervise programmes of capital works. Working closely with landowners, local councils and other agencies to secure all necessary consents and permissions, the post carries a high volume workload so you will need to be able to juggle numerous competing priorities and adapt readily to the use of new technology.

A team player, and competent to NVQ5 level in civil engineering/contact management/ estate management, you will be able to demonstrate the same level of competency in a similar related area. The post also requires a high level of motivation, a good knowledge of rights of way law and practice and excellent organisational and communication skills. Ref: ER/ag/0045

These posts are subject to an Enhanced Disclosure Application to the Criminal Records Bureau.

For more information on the posts above call Graham Rusing 01622 696995.

To apply, visit www.kent.gov.uk/jobs Alternatively, please email recruitment.line@kent.gov.uk or call 01622 696995. Please quote the appropriate reference number.

Closing date: Midday, 4th June 2009.

www.kent.gov.uk/jobs

MARKETING AND SALES ASSISTANT

We are looking for an organised, well presented team player with strong communication skills to support our fast paced business development team. You will be highly conscientious and motivated with a 'can do' attitude. Experience in telemarketing and lead generation is essential.

Please send your CV and salary required to Becky Lander at Adams Creative. becky@adamscreative.co.uk

2 Albion Place
Maidstone
Kent ME14 5DY
www.adamscreative.co.uk

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PUBLIC RELATIONS SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE (MATERNITY LEAVE COVER)

We are looking for an experienced PR professional with excellent writing and client-facing skills, able to work to tight deadlines as well as having great organisational abilities and bundles of enthusiasm and creativity. Some experience in event management would be an asset.

Please send your CV and salary required to Becky Lander at Adams Creative. becky@adamscreative.co.uk

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Senior Electrical Building Services Design Engineer

A senior electrical design engineer is required to take up a position in this small consulting engineering practice based in Ashford, Kent.

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MidKent College is moving into an exciting phase in the history of the College with the relocation from the Horsted and City Way campuses to a stunning new £86m new build located at Lower Lines, Chatham in September this year. Combining this move with the recent award of the Public Private Partnership contract for the Royal School of Military Engineering at Brompton Barracks and the planned development of the existing Maidstone campus, it is a hectic time for the College. MidKent College now has an annual turnover of £45m, a staff of over 1,000 and trains around 12,000 students and 3,000 soldiers each year.

The ideal candidate will therefore be joining during a period of significant change with the opportunity to develop your career within this stimulating environment. You will already have direct experience of working for a senior manager and be fully familiar with the demands and rewards of working at this level.

Reporting directly for and supporting the Principal and Chief Executive, you will hold a position of responsibility, developing strong working relationships with the Directors, Senior Leadership Team, Governors and external Stakeholders involved across the MidKent College Group.

Interested: Please forward your CV to ken.pullan@midkent.ac.uk or call him on 07725 128661 (after 12th May) for an informal discussion.

A full Job Description/Person Specification and application can be seen at www.midkent.ac.uk

Closing Date: 25th May 2009



MidKent College is an equal opportunity employer

The College is committed to Equal Opportunities and to selection on merit. It welcomes applications from all sections of society. We particularly welcome and encourage applications from under represented groups including black, minority ethnic and disabled people.

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in this section

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In addition to the minimum requirements detailed above, candidates will ideally have teaching experience in a practical and/or classroom setting together with a teaching qualification or the willingness to work towards one. Candidates will also need to be adaptable, resourceful and resilient, have excellent communication and IT skills and the ability to work well as part of a team.

The successful candidate will also need to be flexible, as the full-time hours will include teaching some evening classes and travelling to our satellite centres.

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Job description and application form can be downloaded from our website www.hadlow.ac.uk Alternatively you can request an application pack by e-mailing jobs@hadlow.ac.uk or telephoning 01732 850551.

Closing date for completed application forms is Monday 8th June 2009.

Interviews will be held on Thursday, 18th June 2009

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Canterbury College

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Canterbury College is a Further and Higher Education College in the heart of Kent. Our goal is to be one of the best FE Colleges in England by 2010. We have 9,000 students across 300 courses and enjoy an enviable reputation as a great place to learn. Our brand new £50M Campus is also home to nearly 800 staff and we have some great career opportunities which may be right for you.

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Application details can be downloaded at below or email jobs@shepway.gov.uk alternatively call our 24 hour answerphone service on 01303 853481.

The closing date for completed application forms is Friday 5 June 2009.

Shepway District Council
Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue
Folkestone, Kent CT20 2QY
Tel: 01303 853000
www.shepway.gov.uk

Folkestone
Hythe & Romney Marsh
Shepway District Council

www.shepway.gov.uk

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In accordance with Rule 4.106 of the Insolvency Act and Rules 1981, Martin C Armstrong, MPA, MBA, MIA, MIA of Turpin Barker Armstrong, Allen House 1 Westmead Road, Sutton Surrey, give notice that on 06/05/2009 I was appointed Liquidator of A.E.R (Kent) Limited, a registered company of members and creditors. Notice is hereby given that the creditors of the above named company, which is being voluntarily wound up, are required, on or before 06/05/2009 to send to me their full Christian and surnames, their addresses and descriptions, full particulars of their debts or claims, and the names and addresses of their agents and to the undesignated Martin C Armstrong FCA FABP MPA MBA of Allen House 1 Westmead Road Sutton Surrey, the Liquidator of the said company, and, if so required by notice in writing from the said company, to appear before me or by their Solicitors, to come in and prove their debts or claims at such time and place as shall be specified in such notice, or in default thereof they will be excluded from the benefit of the distribution. Dated 06/05/2009 MARTIN C ARMSTRONG FCA FABP MPA MBA, Liquidator T258400



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CRICKET

BY DAVID PRITCHARD

Kent League Division One

The Mote CC - 1st XI

Canterbury CC - 1st XI

THE Mote 1st XI remain top of Division One despite missing out on a deserved victory against Canterbury 1st XI.

Batting first after winning the toss, the Maidstone side racked up 213 for 5 from their 50 overs. Canterbury struggled in reply and were forced to dig in for a draw long before the end of their innings.

To The Mote's frustration the overs ran out with the home side on 146 for 9, one wicket from defeat.

Vulnerable

The club's 2nd XI fared better, beating Bromley 2nd XI by eight runs.

The Mote's total of 167 looked vulnerable, but the home side also found batting difficult and lost their final wicket agonisingly short of victory.

The Mote's 3rd XI were demolished by eight wickets in a one-sided game with Old Williamsonians.

Phil Patterson struck twice to leave the home side on 2 for 2 and it barely got better as The Mote were bowled out for 87. David Bage was the pick of the attack, taking 4 for 27.

Luke Butcher's unbeaten 60 was decisive as the visitors got home in the 25th over.

The Mote's superiority not enough to beat City



FRUSTRATION: Despite being the better side, The Mote (batting) had to settle for a draw against Canterbury which kept them top of the table

PHOTO: GUY LINDSAY

LOCAL CRICKET ROUND-UP**KENT LEAGUE DIVISION FOUR**

Addington Village 1st XI v Sidcup 1st XI

A LAST-wicket partnership denied Addington Village victory against Sidcup at the weekend.

After having been inserted, the villagers scored 211 for 7 with Neil Scott (56) and Mat Bruton (44 not out) keeping the innings together and ensuring they used all 50 overs.

Bruton then starred with the ball, claiming figures of 4 for 29 as Sidcup struggled, but Addington couldn't take the final wicket that would have seen them claim victory, and had to settle for a winning draw.

Addington Village

	Runs
Mark Rimmer	lbw b Noble
James Tooze	ct Dark b Beament
Will Jeffery	ct Stevenson b Puckerin
Neil Scott	ct Robinson b Zaman
Ben Buet	ct Robinson b Zaman
Duncan Brown	ct Krishnamurthy b Zaman
Mat Bruton	not out
Ross McDermott	44
Adam Crowley	ct Puckerin b Mockler
Joe Pigott	not out
Dan Walton	not out
Extras	(3b 2lb 2w 1nb)
Total	211 (7 wickets, 50 overs)

Bowlers

	0	M	R	W
Thomas Beament	11	0	32	1
Dan Dark	3	0	15	0
Scott Noble	8	2	19	1
Norman Puckerin	6	0	23	1
Faisal Zaman	12	1	48	3
Phil Robinson	3	0	17	0
Kevin Mockler	7	1	52	1

Sidcup

	Runs
Peter Stevenson	lbw b Walton
Mat Kilby	lb. Bruton
Phil Robinson	ct Pigott b Crowley
Norman Puckerin	ct Scott b Brown
Seetharam Krishnamurthy	ct Jeffery b Brown
Kevin Mockler	lbw b Bruton
Tin Cook	b Bruton
Dan Dark	lbw b Bruton
Scott Noble	not out
Thomas Beament	b Buet
Faisal Zaman	not out
Extras	(9b 9lb 3w 4nb)
Total	25 (9 wickets, 50 overs)

Bowlers

	0	M	R	W
Ross McDermott	5	1	24	0
Joe Pigott	6	1	19	0
Dan Walton	5	0	27	1
Mat Bruton	10	3	29	4
Neil Scott	8	4	14	0
Adam Crowley	4	0	15	1
Duncan Brown	11	2	29	2
Ben Buet	1	0	1	1

KENT LEAGUE DIVISION FIVE

Tunbridge Wells 3rd XI v Offham 1st XI

BEN Gittings came within two runs of scoring a century as Offham secured a convincing 189-run victory.

Gittings finished unbeaten on 98 and was one of three players, who notched up half-centuries as Offham raced away to 287 for 6 after 50 overs. Tunbridge Wells needed an inspired second innings if they were to avoid defeat.

Offham's impressive bowling attack ended Tunbridge's hopes early on, as they were bowled out for just 98 after 26 overs. Simon Hallbrook was the pick of the bowlers finishing with figures of 4 for 19.

Offham

	Runs
Graham Razey	ct Pinkstone b Thompson
Tom Gittings	ct Pinkstone b Allatt
Leonard Watt	ct Malandkar b Watts
Ben Gittings	not out
Nathan Faulkes	.b Thompson
Martin Coff	ct Watts b Thompson
Lawrence Bell	b Allatt
Mervyn Brook	not out
Daniel Blakeburn	did not bat
Andy Cox	did not bat
Simon Hallbrook	did not bat

Extras

(4b 2lb 3w 2nb)

(6 wickets, 50 overs)

11

Bowlers

0 M R W

Mark Thompson 15 0 63 3

Nick Tunnell 14 1 87 0

Percy Watts 7 0 48 1

Ben Allatt 14 0 83 2

Mercer on course for Isle of Man TT debut



EAGER: Steve Mercer cannot wait to make his Isle of Man TT debut

STEVE Mercer admitted he is already suffering from sleepless nights with just a week remaining before his debut at the Isle of Man TT.

The Maidstone-born superbike rider is set to tackle the notorious 37-mile Isle of Man TT course for the first time, as part of a three-year campaign to try and win the event.

The 26-year-old former British Superbike rider is happy with his progress after a couple of trips to the TT course, but admits learning the course has been a bigger challenge than he had previously thought.

He said: "Preparations have been really good so far. I have made a couple of trips to the island in the last month to

MOTORSPORT

learn the circuit and ride it for the first time on a bike. Learning the circuit is a tough challenge."

"I think there are 256 corners on one lap of the track. It is a place where you do not want to get it wrong either, so learning the circuit is mighty important."

"I have been out on the bike at Brands Hatch to give it a final shake down and it is looking good. I have just got a week or so to wait now and the nerves are starting to kick in."

Mercer will head to the island next week with the first practice sessions getting under way on May 30.

FOOTBALL



APPEAL: Maidstone United are hoping for a boost in funds to build their proposed new ground

Party to raise funds for Stones' stadium

MAIDSTONE United are hosting a fund-raising party on Saturday evening as part of their bid to boost the club's funds to build their proposed new stadium at James Whatman Way.

The event will take place at The Orchard Spot pub at Downswood, near Maidstone, which has been provided free of charge.

All proceeds made from the event will be added to the £4,215 raised so far by the Bring the Stones Home campaign.

Supporter and fanzine editor Bryan Reed embarked on his fundraising challenge this week by travelling the length of Great Britain on a Vespa moped.

The Stones supporter will complete a 1,900 mile journey, which will take him from Maidstone to John O' Groats via Land's End and a return trip to Maidstone.

Proceeds will be split between the Maidstone ground appeal and Demelza House. Meanwhile, defender Ben Lewis has registered to play for Margate next season.

Stones boss disappointed as winger Darts to rivals

FOOTBALL

■ BY TOM HOWARD

LIVELY winger Elliot Bradbrook is the first player to leave Maidstone United in the close season after signing a lucrative move to Ryman Premier League rivals Dartford.

The midfielder, who spent two spells at Maidstone United in his career, was one of the star performers from last season.

Bradbrook joined the club last summer and featured heavily on the left wing, chipping in with five goals in a turbulent season for the Stones.

Maidstone joint-manager Lloyd Hume is disappointed to see Bradbrook leave the club and admitted it was going to be hard to keep a player of his talent with a reduced budget.

He said: "We offered him a new deal as we were desperate to keep hold of him for next season.

"However, Dartford, who are one of those clubs doing well at the moment, were able to offer him a much better deal, which we could not match."

"It is very disappointing to see him go as he has been great for us and I am sure it was a hard decision for him to make after spending two spells with us."

Hume was able to confirm six players from the existing squad have put pen to paper on



DEPARTED Winger Elliot Bradbrook (in gold) has joined rivals Dartford after a successful season with the Stones

new deals at the club. Defenders Ashley Ulph, Nathan Paul and Roland Edge were the first to sign new contracts. Midfield duo Jay Saunders and James Peacock followed shortly after.

Finally, former Margate striker James

Pinnock, who finished top scorer with 12 goals last season, has committed to a second season with the club.

Hume is expecting to hear from the rest of the squad he has offered new deals to, later this month.

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